

Aruba TODAY

On Top Of The News Email: news@arubatoday.com website: www.arubatoday.com Tel:582-7800 Tuesday, January 4, 2011

Michael Jackson doctor faces death charge in court



LOS ANGELES - Prosecutors this week begin offering evidence that Michael Jackson's doctor is responsible for the pop star's death in a case that could hinge on who gave the singer a fatal dose of a powerful drug he used for sleep.

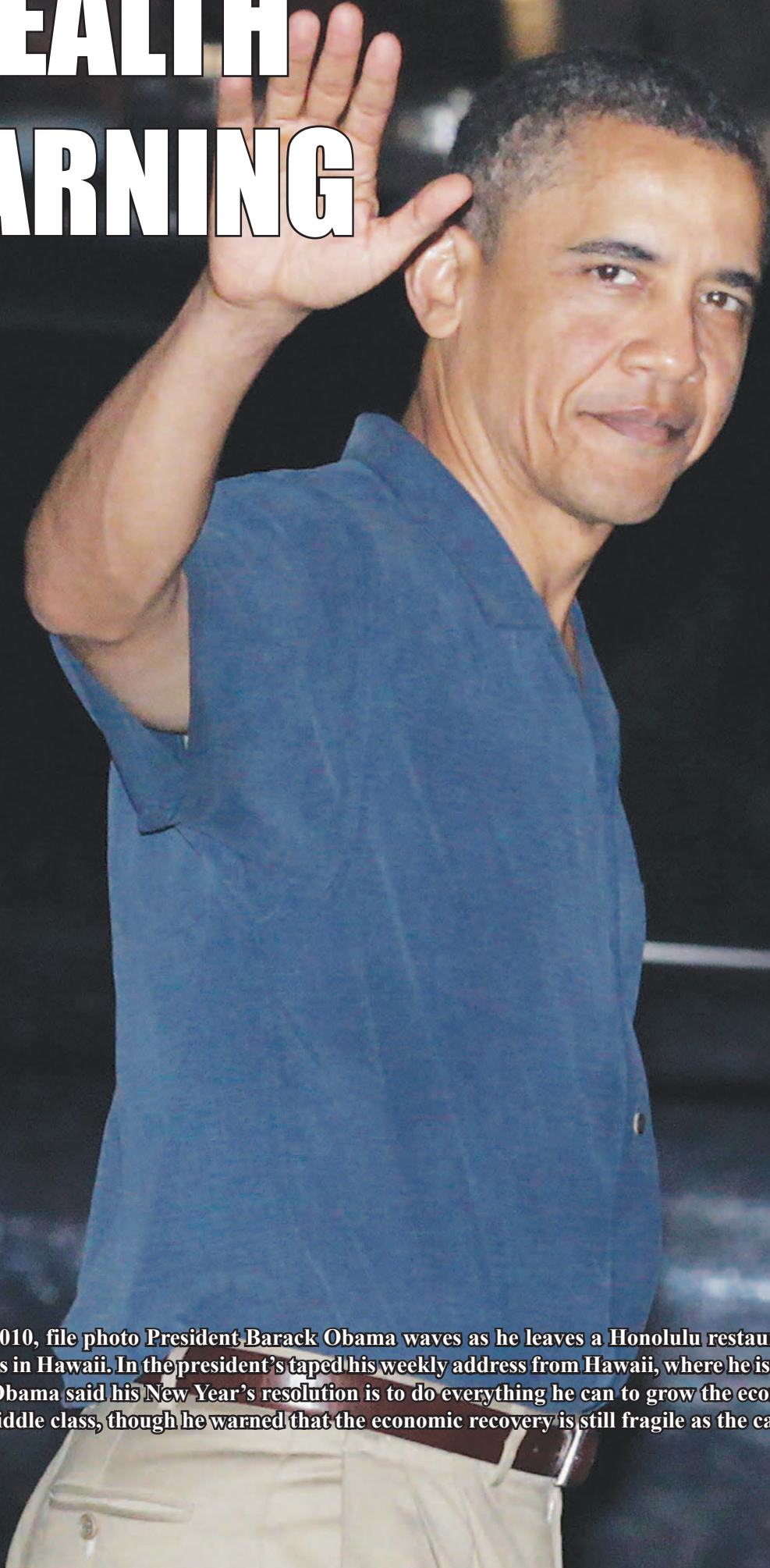
Dr. Conrad Murray, Jackson's physician in 2009, has been charged with involuntary manslaughter in the death, and a Los Angeles judge on Tuesday starts the preliminary hearing largely seen by legal experts as a formality to determine if enough evidence exists to bring the physician to a full trial.

Jackson, one of the best-selling recording artists of all time who generated hits like "Thriller" and "Billie Jean," died of a prescription drug overdose on June 25, 2009, at age 50, after suffering cardiac arrest while in bed at his rented mansion.

Murray has admitted injecting Jackson with the powerful anesthetic propofol, which has been determined to be a key factor in his death. The drug is used mostly in hospital settings, but it was given to Jackson at home as a sleep aid. Prosecutors hope to paint the doctor, who was hired by a concert promoter to care for Jackson before a series of performances, as a man who was in financial trouble and would irresponsibly give the singer drugs to keep his paycheck.

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HEALTH WARNING



In this Dec. 29, 2010, file photo President Barack Obama waves as he leaves a Honolulu restaurant after dining with family and friends in Hawaii. In the president's taped his weekly address from Hawaii, where he is spending the holidays with his family, Obama said his New Year's resolution is to do everything he can to grow the economy, create jobs and strengthen the middle class, though he warned that the economic recovery is still fragile as the calendar turns to 2011.

*Associated Press
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Labs seek clues after 3,000 birds die in Arkansas



A worker with U.S. Environmental Services, a private contractor, picks up a dead bird in Beebe, Ark. on Saturday, Jan. 1, 2011 as more can be seen on the street behind him. The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission said Saturday more than 1,000 dead black birds fell from the sky in Beebe. The agency said its enforcement officers began receiving reports about the dead birds about 11:30 p.m. Friday.

(AP Photo/The Daily Citizen, Warren Watkins)

By JEANNIE NUSS,
Associated Press

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — Wildlife experts are trying to solve a mystery that evoked images of the apocalypse: Why did more than 3,000 red-winged blackbirds tumble from the Arkansas sky shortly before midnight on New Year's Eve?

Scientists are investigating whether fireworks, poison or bad weather might have forced the birds out of the sky, or if a disoriented bird simply led the flock into the ground. "We have a lot more questions," said Karen Rowe, an ornithologist with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. She said there are documented cases of birds becoming confused and plunging to earth.

Residents of the small town

of Beebe, northeast of Little Rock, awoke Saturday to find thousands of dead blackbirds littering a 1.5-square-mile area. The birds inexplicably dropped dead, landing on homes, cars and lawns.

Cleanup crews wore white suits, gas masks and rubber gloves as they spent the holiday weekend gathering the carcasses.

The birds will not be missed. Large blackbird roosts like one at Beebe can have thousands of birds that leave ankle- to knee-deep piles of droppings in places.

Nearly a decade ago, state wildlife officials fired blanks from shotguns and cannons to move a roost of thousands of blackbirds from Beebe, but in recent years many of the migratory birds returned.

Bird carcasses were shipped

to the Arkansas Livestock and Poultry Commission and the National Wildlife Health Center in Madison, Wis. Researchers in Georgia also asked for a set of the dead birds. Test results could be back in a week.

Rowe said many of the birds suffered injuries from striking the ground, but it was not clear whether they were alive when they hit.

Blackbirds have notoriously bad eyesight. If startled at night, they could easily fly into the ground, Rowe said. A few grackles and a couple of starlings were also among

the dead. Those species roost with blackbirds, particularly in winter.

Violent weather rumbled over much of the state Friday, including a tornado that killed three people in Cincinnati, Ark. Lightning could have killed the birds directly or startled them to the point that they became confused. Hail also has been known to knock birds from the sky.

In 2001, lightning killed about 20 mallards at Hot Springs, and a flock of dead pelicans was found in the woods about 10 years ago, Rowe said. Lab tests showed that they, too,

had been hit by lighting.

Back in 1973, hail knocked birds from the sky at Stuttgart, Ark., on the day before hunting season. Some of the birds were caught in a violent storm's updrafts and became encased in ice before falling from the sky.

Rowe said poisoning was possible but unlikely. She said birds of prey and other animals, including dogs and cats, ate several of the dead birds and suffered no ill effects. "Every dog and cat in the neighborhood that night was able to get a fresh snack that night," Rowe said. □

New Year's resolutions?

Brain can sabotage success



WASHINGTON — Uh-oh, the new year's just begun and already you're finding it hard to keep those resolutions to junk the junk food, get off the couch or kick smoking. There's a biological reason a lot of our bad habits are so hard to break they get wired into our brains.

That's not an excuse to give up. Understanding how unhealthy behaviors become ingrained has scientists learning some tricks that may help good habits replace the bad.

"Why are bad habits stronger? You're fighting against the power of an immediate reward," says Dr. Nora Volkow, director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse and an authority on the brain's pleasure pathway.

It's the fudge vs. broccoli choice: Chocolate's yum factor tends to beat out the knowledge that sticking with veggies brings an eventual

reward of lost pounds.

"We all as creatures are hard-wired that way, to give greater value to an immediate reward as opposed to something that's delayed," Volkow says.

Just how that bit of happiness turns into a habit involves a pleasure-sensing chemical named dopamine. It conditions the brain to want that reward again and again reinforcing the connection each time especially when it gets the right cue from your environment.

People tend to overestimate their ability to resist temptations around them, thus undermining attempts to shed bad habits, says experimental psychologist Loran Nordgren, an assistant professor at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management.

"People have this self-control hubris, this belief they can handle more than they can,"

says Nordgren, who studies the tug-of-war between willpower and temptation.

In one experiment, he measured whether heavy smokers could watch a film that romanticizes the habit called "Coffee and Cigarettes" without taking a puff. Upping the ante, they'd be paid according to their level of temptation: Could they hold an unlit cigarette while watching? Keep the pack on the table? Or did they need to leave the pack in another room?

Smokers who'd predicted they could resist a lot of temptation tended to hold the unlit cigarette and were more likely to light up than those who knew better than to hang onto the pack, says Nordgren. He now is beginning to study how recovering drug addicts deal with real-world temptations.

But temptation can be more insidious than how close at hand the cigarettes are.

Always snack in front of your favorite TV show? A dopamine-rich part of the brain named the striatum memorizes rituals and routines that are linked to getting a particular reward, explains NIDA's Volkow. Eventually, those environmental cues trigger the striatum to make some behaviors almost automatic. Even scientists who recognize it can fall prey. □

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Cold storm brings Vegas snow, closes I-5 in Calif.

LAS VEGAS – Gamblers on the Las Vegas Strip awoke to snow flurries Monday morning as part of a winter storm that turned the main highway between Southern and Central California into a snowy, icy parking lot.

Hundreds of motorists returning from the New Year's holiday found themselves stuck after Interstate 5 was closed for a second day over the 4,160-foot-high Tejon Pass, about 70 miles north of Los Angeles.

The California Highway Patrol closed a 30-mile stretch of I-5 shortly after 12:30 p.m. Sunday because of blowing snow. Blizzard conditions eased to light snow flurries early Monday but the road remained clogged with snow and patches of ice, and the Highway Patrol said the freeway probably will remain closed for hours as snow plows struggle to clear the mountain route.

"It took us two hours to go five miles," said Charlie Crandall,

who was trying to return north after visiting relatives in San Diego. He and a friend were lucky enough to get hotel rooms nearby, but hundreds more didn't get lodging, and the cars kept coming.

"A lot of people slept in their cars last night," said Crandall, 55.

Other drivers spent hours crawling over Interstate 15's snowy Cajon Pass to get back to Los Angeles from Las Vegas, where there was a trace of snow Monday at the official measuring station near McCarran International Airport.

"You don't come to Las Vegas and think, 'Hey, it's going to snow,'" said Josh Hansen, 22, of Los Angeles, who was posing with friends amid flurries next to the iconic "Welcome to Las Vegas" sign. "It's really weird."

National Weather Service meteorologist John Adair said there won't be any accumulation near the hotels and casinos, but foothills



neighborhoods several miles west of the Strip got one or more inches of snow, and up to 6 inches of snow fell overnight in Pahrump, a high desert community about 60 miles west of Las Vegas.

The weather service predicted more snow at elevations as low as 1,500 feet. On Sunday, suburban Santa Clarita just north of Los Angeles got a rare snowfall.

In Montana and North Dakota,

Amtrak expected to resume normal service Monday after a weekend weather stoppage. Snow, freezing temperatures and subzero wind chills had led Burlington Northern Santa Fe to halt passenger traffic on its tracks, while freight trains ran at slower speeds.

In Utah, officials found the body of a missing hiker Monday morning after the search was halted late Sunday because of cold and dangerous

conditions.

The man fell 80 and 100 feet to his death from a cliff ledge in Snow Canyon State Park north of Santa Clara, KSTU-TV reported. He was among a group of three hikers who became stranded on a hazardous climb.

Authorities rescued the two other men Sunday, Washington County Sheriff-elect Cory Pulsipher told The Spectrum of St. George. □

Pa. allows dumping of tainted waters from gas boom



The natural gas boom gripping parts of the U.S. has a nasty byproduct: wastewater so salty, and so polluted with metals like barium and strontium, that most states require drillers to get rid of the stuff by injecting it down shafts thousands of feet deep. Not in Pennsylvania, one of the states at the center of the gas rush.

There, the liquid that gushes from gas wells is only partially treated for substances that could be environmentally harmful, then dumped into rivers and streams from which communities get their

drinking water.

In the two years since the frenzy of activity began in the vast underground rock formation known as the Marcellus Shale, Pennsylvania has been the only state allowing waterways to serve as the primary disposal place for the huge amounts of wastewater produced by a drilling technique called hydraulic fracturing, or fracking.

State regulators, initially caught flat-footed, tightened the rules this year for any new water treatment plants but allowed any existing operations to continue

discharging water into rivers. At least 3.6 million barrels of the waste were sent to treatment plants that empty into rivers during the 12 months ending June 30, according to state records. That is enough to cover a square mile with more than 8 1/2 inches of brine.

Researchers are still trying to figure out whether Pennsylvania's river discharges, at their current levels, are dangerous to humans or wildlife. Several studies are under way, some under the auspices of the Environmental Protection Agency.

State officials, energy companies and the operators of treatment plants insist that with the right safeguards in place, the practice poses little or no risk to the environment or to the hundreds of thousands of people who rely on those rivers for drinking water.

But an Associated Press review found that Pennsylvania's efforts to minimize, control and track wastewater

discharges from the Marcellus Shale have sometimes failed. For example:

Of the roughly 6 million barrels of well liquids produced in a 12-month period examined by The AP, the state couldn't account for the disposal method for 1.28 million barrels, about a fifth of the total, because of a weakness in its reporting system and incomplete filings by some energy companies.

Some public water utilities that sit downstream from big gas wastewater treatment plants have struggled to stay under the federal maximum for contaminants known as trihalomethanes, which can cause cancer if swallowed over a long period.

Regulations that should have kept drilling wastewater out of the important Delaware River Basin, the water supply for 15 million people in four states, were circumvented for many months.

In 2009 and part of 2010, energy company Cabot Oil & Gas trucked more

than 44,000 barrels of well wastewater to a treatment facility in Hatfield Township, a Philadelphia suburb. Those liquids ultimately were discharged into a creek that provides drinking water to 17 municipalities with more than 300,000 residents. Cabot acknowledged it should not have happened.

People in those communities had been told repeatedly that the watershed was free of gas waste.

"This is an outrage," said Tracy Carluccio, deputy director of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network, an environmental group. "This is indicative of the lack of adequate oversight."

The situation in Pennsylvania is being watched carefully by regulators in other states, some of which have begun allowing some river discharges. New York also sits over the Marcellus Shale, but Gov. David Paterson has slapped a moratorium on high-volume fracking while environmental regulations are drafted. □

Navy probes racy onboard videos by carrier chief



Language and faces masked by The Virginian-Pilot

NORFOLK, Va. – Videos just coming to light show the crew of a Navy aircraft carrier got an eyeful on shipboard TV: Gay slurs, suggestive shower scenes and mimicked masturbation in clips made not by some sailor run amok but by the ship's second-most powerful officer.

The Navy said Sunday it will investigate the "clearly inappropriate" videos shown through the nuclear-powered ship's closed-circuit television system as part of an onboard movie night. The star of the videos, made in 2006 and 2007, is Capt. Owen Honors, who now commands the USS Enterprise but was its executive officer the second in command when the videos were made.

The Norfolk-based Enterprise was deployed in the Middle

East at the time the videos were made and is weeks from deploying again.

The Virginian-Pilot newspaper reported on the videos in its Sunday editions and posted an edited version of one video on its website.

It's not immediately known why the images are surfacing now. The Virginian-Pilot quoted anonymous crew members who said they raised concerns aboard the ship about the videos when they aired, but they were brushed off.

But a former crew member who says she saw the videos while serving praised Honors as "the best the Navy has to offer" and said the skits were welcome entertainment onboard.

"It's no worse then anything you'd see on Saturday Night

Live or the Family Guy," said Houston native Misty Davis, who worked on the Enterprise's weapons systems during her 2006-2010 tour. It's clear from the videos that Honors, who took over the ship's command in May, had already gotten complaints when some of them were made.

"Over the years I've gotten several complaints about inappropriate material during these videos, never to me personally but, gutlessly, through other channels," he said in the introduction to the video posted by the newspaper. He goes on to use a derogatory term for gays and tells his critics: "This evening, all of you bleeding hearts why don't you just go ahead and hug yourselves for the next 20 minutes or so, because there's a really good chance you're gonna be offended." Next comes a sequence of what appear to be outtakes in which Honors and others curse, followed by clips in which he and others are shown making hand motions that mimic masturbation.

Honors segues to the next segment by saying, "Finally let's get to my favorite topic chicks in the shower." Next are shown clips of pairs of women and a pair of men pretending to shower together. No nudity is shown, but the men's and

women's bare shoulders imply they are nude.

Other clips in the video show a man in drag and a mock rectal examination.

Navy Cmdr. Chris Sims said in a statement sent to The Associated Press that the videos "were not acceptable then and are not acceptable in today's Navy."

Executive officers and other leaders "are charged to lead by example and are held accountable for setting the proper tone and upholding the standards of honor, courage and commitment that we expect sailors to exemplify," he said. Sims said U.S. Fleet Forces Command "has initiated an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the production of these videos." In a statement to the Virginian-Pilot on Friday, however, the Navy said it had put a stop to videos with "inappropriate content" on the Enterprise several years ago.

"It is unfortunate that copies of these videos remained accessible to crewmembers, especially after leadership took action approximately four years ago to ensure any future videos reflected the proper tone," the Navy said.

It also said the videos "were intended to be humorous skits focusing the crew's attention on specific issues such as port

visits, traffic safety, water conservation, ship cleanliness, etc."

A phone listing for Honors was not immediately available. He is a 1983 alumnus of the U.S. Naval Academy and was a naval aviator before holding command. He attended the U.S. Naval Fighter Weapons School, also known as Top Gun.

The newspaper reported that the videos were made during the Enterprise's two six-month deployments to the Middle East in 2006 and 2007.

Commissioned in 1961, the Enterprise is the world's first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier. It is scheduled to sail two more deployments before it is decommissioned in 2013. It can carry a crew of more than 5,800.

The commanding officer of the Enterprise at the time the videos were made, Lawrence Rice, was later promoted to the rank of the rear admiral and had been assigned to the Norfolk-based U.S. Joint Forces Command, but is no longer there, a spokeswoman said.

The video posted by the newspaper included clips of past "movies" Honors had made including several statements in which he holds his higher-ups blameless for the material. □



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Year's first partial solar eclipse occurs Tuesday

LOS ANGELES – Early risers in Madrid, London and Paris take note.

The moon will appear to nip a bite out of the sun Tuesday, a spectacle that will be visible at sunrise across much of Europe.

The partial solar eclipse can also be seen from northern Africa, the Middle East and central Asia, where it will occur at sunset.

Tuesday's solar show is the first of four partial eclipses of the sun to occur this year. The last time there were this many partial solar eclipses was in 1982.

The next time will be in 2029. There is no total solar eclipse this year.

A solar eclipse happens when the moon lines up between the sun and the Earth. This casts a lunar shadow on the Earth's surface and obscures the solar disk. During a partial solar eclipse, only part of the sun is blotted out.

Tuesday's eclipse will begin in northern Algeria. As the moon's shadow travels east, western Europe will wake up to a sunrise eclipse. In Madrid, a little more than half of the sun's diameter will be covered. In London and Paris,

about three-quarters of the sun will be hidden.

The greatest eclipse will occur over Sweden where about 85 percent of the sun will be blocked. A sunset eclipse will be visible from Russia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia and northwest China.

Williams College astronomer Jay Pasachoff planned to be in Israel and meet up with a local astronomy club to test out his cameras and other photography equipment during the eclipse.

Since partial solar eclipses yield little information of scientific interest, Pasachoff



instead will educate fellow sun chasers to resist staring directly at the sun. Instead, people should peer through commercially available solar

filters to avoid eye damage.

"It will be a run-the-mill partial solar eclipse, but it's more fun than a lunar eclipse," Pasachoff said. □

U.N. Dedicates 2011 to Forests' Health



The new year has a new name among environmentalists. The U.N. General Assembly declared 2011 to be the International Year of Forests.

The moniker will be used to raise awareness about how to improve the health of all types of forests, which cover 31 percent of the Earth's land surface, according to an environmental group that's behind the initiative. The International Year of Forests will officially begin Jan. 24 with the U.N. forum on the topic in New York.

The world's forests support the planet's diverse creatures, and keeping forests robust also could help humanity achieve some of its biggest goals: reducing poverty, curbing climate change and achieving sustainable development, according to a statement from the International Union for Conservation of Nature. The IUCN is a global environmental network of governmental and private groups. In 'Forests 2011' will be an international celebration of the central role of people in the management, conservation and sustainable development of our world's forests," said Julia Marton-Lefèvre, the IUCN director-general. "The air we breathe, the food, water and medicines we need to survive, the variety of life

on Earth, the climate that shapes our present and future - they all depend on forests. 2011 must be the year when the world recognizes the vital importance of healthy forests to life on earth - for all people and biodiversity."

Throughout 2011, the IUCN will highlight new research findings, promote restoration work and build upon recent successes of the international 2010 REDD-plus (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation) agenda. Home to 80 percent of the world's biodiversity and 300 million people, forests provide livelihoods for 1.6 billion people, almost a quarter of humanity, according to the IUCN.

Forests store more carbon than the amount currently in the atmosphere. Saving them is the quickest and most cost-effective means of curbing global emissions, some scientists say. Halving these emissions between 2010 and 2200 would save an estimated \$3.7 trillion, according to the IUCN.

"Forests 2011" is the latest branding campaign from the United Nations. 2010 was the International Year of Biodiversity, and the decade of 2011 to 2020 has been named the Decade of Biodiversity. □

Attorneys for Fla. mother violated order

ORLANDO, Fla. – A judge has ruled that attorneys for a Florida mother charged with killing her 2-year-old daughter have violated a court order to turn over information about expert witnesses who will testify on her behalf.

Circuit Judge Belvin Perry said Monday in Orlando that Casey Anthony's defense attorneys missed deadlines last month.

Prosecutors had asked that the attorneys be fined \$500 a day until they provided the information. But the judge says they will have to pay an amount to be determined later. The judge also ordered that the experts must provide written reports about what they will say at trial. Anything not in the reports or in depositions will not be allowed at the May trial. She has pleaded not guilty in the death of her daughter Caylee.

Attorneys for a Florida mother accused of killing her daughter want a judge to prohibit testimony about her sex life with a witness during her trial. Casey Anthony's attorneys will make their request during a hearing Monday in Orlando.



They've filed a motion asking that sex-related questions from an interview detectives had with Anthony Rosciano not be allowed.

Detectives asked Rosciano whether Anthony was "clingy" when she had sex, whether they used protection, whether Anthony had any sexually transmitted diseases and where they had sex. Defense attorneys say the questions are irrelevant.

Anthony is charged with first-degree murder for the death of her 2-year-old daughter Caylee. She has pleaded not guilty and says a baby sitter kidnapped Caylee. □

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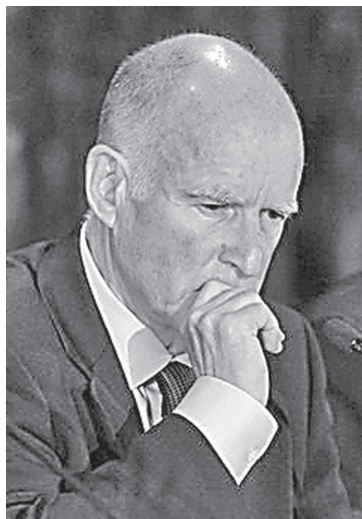
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Jerry Brown returns to lead a troubled California



SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Democrat Jerry Brown was sworn in Monday as California's 39th governor, returning to the office he left 28 years ago but inheriting a much different and more troubled state than the one he led then.

The man who once was California's most famous bachelor took the oath of office after being introduced by his wife of five years, former Gap Inc. executive Anne Gust Brown, inside Sacramento Memorial Auditorium. She held a Bible that was her

grandfather's and was used during her wedding to Brown. Brown has predicted a grim future for the financially beleaguered state. Where his predecessor, Republican Arnold Schwarzenegger, expressed optimism at every turn, Brown has been realistic since winning the Nov. 2 election. California has faced several years of deep budget deficits and is confronting another estimated at \$28 billion through June 2012.

Its general fund is \$15 billion less than it was just three years ago, reflecting a sharp drop in tax revenue from a recession that has battered the economy of the nation's most populous state. Brown, 72, says the choices facing California's 38.8 million people are painful ones.

"The year ahead will demand courage and sacrifice," he said after taking the oath from California Supreme Court Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye. Brown noted the toll the recession has taken on California and referred to polls

showing most voters believe the state is on the wrong track. He urged lawmakers of both political parties to get out of what he called their "comfort zones" and to "rise above ideology" for the good of the state. The ceremony was a scaled-down affair, reflecting the austere style of the former Jesuit seminarian and Buddhism student.

Brown's speech lasted about 15 minutes, and the only other speaker listed on the one-page program was his wife.

Students from two charter schools Brown started the Oakland Military Institute and the Oakland School for the Arts opened the ceremony. Schwarzenegger and former first lady Maria Shriver, former Gov. Gray Davis, Sen. Dianne Feinstein and outgoing House Speaker Nancy Pelosi were among the roughly 3,000 people attending.

After winning office, Brown promised to travel California and hold what he called a civic dialogue about what Californians want from their

government and what they are willing to pay for it. After voters rejected an \$18-a-year license fee to stabilize state park funding, Brown declared that Californians were "in no mood to add to their burdens." Yet his press aides have not quashed speculation that Brown will try to call a special election this spring to extend a set of temporary tax hikes approved in 2009. Brown said he would not raise taxes without voter approval, but will need some Republican help to reach the two-thirds legislative vote necessary to place any tax or fee measure on the ballot.

The new governor will release his budget proposal for the coming fiscal year next Monday, when he is expected to deliver voters a series of stark choices. He said his budgets would not contain "smoke and mirrors," an apparent reference to spending plans signed by Schwarzenegger over the past few years that often contained accounting gimmicks and unrealistic

revenue assumptions as a way to balance the budgets on paper.

He promised his version would be painful.

"It's a tough budget for tough times," he said.

Brown has been engaged in the budget problem even before his official swearing-in, visiting lawmakers and finance experts in the capital frequently and hold town hall sessions in Sacramento and Los Angeles to discuss the health of California's finances and public school system.

Brown has spent a lifetime in politics, including terms as the secretary of state, attorney general and mayor of Oakland, but also will be calling upon a set of skills learned outside the political arena as he tries to negotiate with a Legislature that has grown increasingly partisan and in many cases hostile. His years practicing Buddhism in Japan and working with Mother Teresa in India may come in handy as he tries to broker deals with dug-in lawmakers. □



FILE - In this Dec. 22, 2010 file photo, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nev. is seen in his office on Capitol Hill in Washington. Eager to show who's now in charge, the House's new Republican majority plans to vote to repeal President Barack Obama's landmark health care overhaul before he even shows up in their chamber to give his State of the Union address.

(AP Photo/Alex Brandon, File)

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR,
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Eager to show who's now in charge, the House's new Republican majority plans to vote to repeal President Barack Obama's landmark health care overhaul before he even shows up in their chamber to give his State of the Union address.

Dramatic as that early showdown promises to be

— the vote will be Jan. 12, Republicans said Monday — it will be just the first in a series of struggles expected to play out in the next few months. Obama returns Tuesday from his holiday vacation, fresh off lame-duck legislative victories late last year, and Republicans will be sworn in Wednesday, primed to challenge him after gaining House control in last fall's elections.

Full repeal of the health care

House GOP sending Obama a message on health repeal

law is still a long shot. The House vote would be just the first, easiest step. But House Republicans vow they will follow up with dozens of attempts to hack away at what they derisively call "Obamacare."

The strategy is not risk-free for the Republicans, who won't have a replacement plan of their own ready by the time of the repeal vote. But they say there's no time to lose.

Senate Democratic leaders are sending their own "you-don't-scare-me" message. In a letter Monday to House Speaker-to-be John Boehner, they served notice that they'll block any repeal, arguing it would kill popular provisions such as improved prescription coverage for Medicare.

Beyond the early health care vote, emboldened Republicans are straining to challenge the president's spending priorities, setting up likely conflicts over

the budget and the country's debt ceiling.

Those votes will be early tests of how the president will maneuver with a divided Congress, as both he and Republicans look ahead to the next elections.

Most likely, both parties will carry the main issues of the health care debate into the 2012 campaign, when Obama is expected to seek a second term against a Republican challenger, and House and Senate control will be up for grabs again. "It's not going to be easy; it's going to be a long, hard slog," said Rep. Steve King, R-Iowa, an early leader in the health care repeal drive. The quick thumbs-down vote by the House will have "tremendous utility and value," King said, but it may take electing a Republican president in Obama's place to accomplish the overall goal. All the while, the Obama

administration intends to keep putting into place the law's framework for covering more than 30 million uninsured people. Ultimately, Obama still has his veto pen, and Republicans aren't anywhere close to the two-thirds majorities they would need to override.

"Repeal and replace" worked as a campaign slogan to motivate voters concerned about the growing reach of government under Obama. But a single-minded focus on repeal could backfire as a Republican governing strategy. Polls show that some parts of the law are popular, and many Americans would have wanted even bigger changes. Look for Republicans to try to deny money for the government to carry out the law.

They'll also attempt to strip out sections of it, such as a new long-term care program. □



Second National Boa Constrictor sweep



The Second National Boa Constrictor sweep is planned for January 9th, 2011. This boa constrictor capturing activity will take place in the Colony from 8:00 to 11:00 A.M. The meeting point is next to the large Valero sign. On January 5th, 2011, a training session will be held at the Centro di Bario Lago Heights from 8:00 to 9:00 P.M.

Volunteers are invited to participate at this second sweep and are requested to register at boa.taskforce@gmail.com. Questions may also be sent to this email address.

The Boa Constrictor Taskforce was instated by the Minister of Integration, Infrastructure and Environment, Mr. Bennie Sevinger, in an effort to keep the numbers of boas in Aruba's nature as low as possible.

The Boa Constrictor is an invasive species and forms a serious threat to Aruba's fauna. A conservative estimation illustrates that more than 17,000 birds were consumed island wide in 2010 by the boa. The first national sweep was held on December 12th, 2010. More than 120 volunteers participated in this national event. The taskforce is very happy with such a large turnout, but still hopes that the numbers of volunteers at national sweeps will increase. During the boa training session planned on January 5th, instructions will be given about how to identify the different snake species in Aruba's wildlife and how to capture a boa in a very easy way. □

New Plaza Quiz Night Series kicks off on Tuesday, January 4



The new year has hardly begun or Café the Plaza in the Renaissance Marketplace is making the quiz fanatics on the island happy with its new Quiz Night Series. This 8-week brain squeezing happening takes place on Tuesday evenings; questions range from music to movies to geography and history to current events and medicine. Everything under the

sun, or moon, may be the subject of an easy or hard question. Many quiz lovers greatly enjoy the Tuesday evenings at Café the Plaza; they have formed teams and wrack their brains to come up with the right answers. The Plaza Quiz Nights start at 8 pm sharp; quiz master Evert Bongers and his lovely assistant Petra van Haren pose the questions and keep

the scores. Questions are asked in Dutch and in English, in Spanish too if there are Spanish speakers in the audience. There are eight rounds of questions per evening; one is an audio round and one a picture round. Quizzers can form teams of a maximum of five participants. The entry fee is AWG. 5,-- per person. Sponsor of the Quiz Night Series is Pepia Est. □



El Gaucho pampers Divi's Executives



Oranjestad – The Department of Human Resources and the Accounting Department of Divi Resorts enjoyed an elegant evening of fine food and wine at El Gaucho Argentine Grill in honor of the holiday season and the New Year celebrations. The members of both departments go out for

dinner together every year, and love the bonding experience, laughing and sharing with friends and colleagues. This year's outing was especially entertaining, as it continued past-dinner, long into the night, at Garufa Cocktail Lounge just across the street from El Gaucho. □



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Deafening pagara rings in the New Year at De Suikertuin



Traffic in the Wilhelminastraat was halted for a while last Friday afternoon when bartender Alan of De Suikertuin restaurant unrolled a mega pagara to ring in the New Year.

December 31 was celebrated with deafeningly loud noises; the year 2011 is certainly going to be fantastic, judging from the terrifying racket all over.



As the evil ghosts fled, a glass of champagne was raised to good luck, happiness and cheer for everybody at De Suikertuin. Cheers! ☐

Aruba TODAY

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The Radisson Casino Enjoys Year End Activities



Palm Beach – Two exciting tournaments took place at the Casino at the Radisson before New Year's and immediately thereafter. The Casino concluded 2010 with a suspenseful Poker Tournament and opened 2011 with an entertaining Slot Tournament.

On Thursday, December 30th, 2010, 1st place winner Alberto Franco staying at the Westin, chop split his earnings with another 1st place

winner Felix Marakowsky, staying at the Radisson, each pocketing a handsome \$1,170 take; 3rd place winner, Walter Sturm staying at the Bucuti Beach Resort won \$720, and 4th place winner Miguel Marcano, staying at the Amsterdam Manor, received \$432.

The Slot Tournament on Saturday, January 1st, 2011, featured 4 lucky winners; 1st place winner Francis Fecurda won \$300, 2nd place winner,

Junior Mora cleared \$200 and 3rd place winner Mercedes Tromp received \$100.

New Year's Eve at the Casino delivered a thrill-filled night with a great number of surprise prizes, awarding casino patrons with gift certificates for beauty treatments at Larimar Spa, dinners at the resort's AAA, 4-star rated Sunset Grille restaurant and buffet passes to Gilligan's Restaurant. □



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“1,500,000 PROMOTION”

Over Twenty Five Lucky Winners

PALM BEACH - Recently, the Stellaris Casino concluded its biggest promotion of 2010 “1,500,000 Florins” promotion in their brand new casino.

The promotion started the 1st of November, where casino players with a player’s card can accumulate points playing on slot machines and tables. Every 20 point on slots or 25 points on tables can be redeemed to respective tickets for the promotion. During the evening champagne and hors d’oeuvres were served and local band NBO performed live on the second story stage above the bar. Drawings started at 7:30pm with a fully packed casino. Casino players were waiting anxiously as the first 20 winners were announced between 7:30 and 10:30pm with a chance to win between 200 and 2000 Florins. At 11:30pm, Casino Marketing Manager Adolf Everon picked ten lucky names from the fully loaded raffle drum, to have the chance to go to the board for the “1,5 million Florins”. From the ten winners loyal casino guest Alvin Giel opened his envelope and showed everyone with a big smile on his face, he was the one who had the chance to win the grand prize. After choosing number 71, Alvin



Giel opened his envelope and won the amazing amount of 10,000 Florins cash. The nine other winners won cash prizes ranging from 500, 600, 700, 800, 900, 1,000, 1,500, 2,000 and 2,500 Florins. Casino Marketing Manager Adolf Everon revealed the envelope that had the grand prize of 1,5 million Florins; number 97.

In addition the Stellaris Casino announced Victor

Huaytala – Baiggorr as the winner of the Bingo Hot Shot of the Month December. Mr Huayala –Baigorr won a dinner for two at Champions, Free bingo for a month and \$500 in cash.

The Stellaris Casino staff its associates, who assisted with the final promotion of 2011 and all casino guests who participated in the “1,500,000 promotion”. □



Aruba TODAY

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Bad Signs in Worsening Côte d'Ivoire Crisis

WASHINGTON, DC – Leaders from neighboring African states, the United Nations, and even U.S. President Obama are renewing their push for Côte d'Ivoire President Laurent Gbagbo to leave the office, which he has clung onto despite losing a recent presidential election. Ongoing post-election violence has claimed at least 173 lives, a number expected to rise if the UN confirms reports of mass graves being dug by military elements loyal to Gbagbo. Earlier, we explored the pan-African effort to prevent civil war and possible reasons why crisis and violence persist in this West African country. Now here are the most recent international efforts to deal with Gbagbo and some worrying signs about this conflict's future.

African Pushes for Peaceful Resolution Go Nowhere The New York Times' David Goodman reports, "Leaders of four African states traveled to the Ivory Coast on Monday in a second attempt in less than a week to persuade Laurent Gbagbo" to step down. However, "Gbagbo has remained defiant in the face of mounting international pressure, and it appeared unlikely that the African delegation would succeed in its goal on Monday after having failed in a first attempt last week." But those foreign leaders are expected to keep pushing because "Gbagbo's refusal to budge has placed the burden of action on the international community, which risks a loss of credibility if it allows Mr. Gbagbo to remain in place." Will Africa Take Up Threat of Force? African leaders, such as Kenyan Prime Minister Raila Odinga, who is also the lead African Union representative in Côte d'Ivoire, have warned that the AU could remove Gbagbo "by force" if he doesn't step down. Now, Reuters's Ange Aboa and Tim Cocks say, "if military forces are eventually sent in by [West African nations], it may trigger open conflict between Gbagbo's government army and the [West African] force. Northern rebels who tried to topple Gbagbo in 2002 have said they would also get involved." However, "West African leaders are seen as unlikely to carry through the threat of force because of the risk of being bogged down in an urban war. They are also believed to lack the operational intelligence to track Gbagbo and his supporters down in a strike."

UN Investigating Possible Mass Graves In a sign of just how violent this political crisis may have turned the normally quite peaceful Côte d'Ivoire, UPI reports, "United Nations peacekeepers were ordered to do all in their power to investigate reports of atrocities and mass graves in Ivory Coast, officials said." Adding to that suspicion, "Peacekeepers have so far been kept away from the alleged mass graves." UPI says the UN suspects two possible sites, both in "pro-Gbagbo" areas.

Liberian Mercenaries 'Looking for Work' in Côte d'Ivoire Radio Netherlands Worldwide reports that Liberian mercenaries--"impoverished former fighters from Liberia's civil war of the late 1980s and 1990s"--are already traveling to the Côte d'Ivoire to look for work. Machine guns and machetes in hand, the impoverished fighters-for-hire say they are willing to fight for either side. Already, Gbagbo is accused of "employing hundreds of Liberian mercenaries in deadly raids on pro-[opposition] neighbourhoods. Gbagbo's camp denies the charge, but diplomats and security sources say there may be up 1,000 on his payroll." □



Ugly Debate Expected for Republican National Committee Chair

WASHINGTON, DC – The five candidates running to lead the Republican National Committee will debate Monday afternoon, and many expect the contest to turn ugly as an embattled Michael Steele fights to hold onto his job. The current chairman will "name names" and "make it personal," Fox News' Chris Stirewalt reports. Few in Washington expected Steele to run for reelection, given his many cringe-worthy remarks and poor fundraising record (the RNC will likely face a debt of \$12 million at the start of next year, by far the biggest debt ever in a presidential campaign year). Now few expect Steele to win.

The candidates are Wisconsin committee chair Reince Priebus, ex-Michigan chair Saul Anuzis, ex-RNC co-chair Ann Wagner, and ex-RNC deputy chair Maria Cino. They need 85 of the 168 RNC members' votes to win. "The man to watch is Priebus, the frontrunner in public endorsements," Stirewalt reports. "The knock on Priebus is that he and Steele are somehow in cahoots." Priebus is even using the same political consultants Steele used. "The suspicion is that Priebus is either a stalking horse intended to divide the opposition and clear a path for Steele, or that Steele has remained in the race to block for Priebus. For Talladega Nights fans, this would be the 'shake and bake' strategy. But who's Ricky Bobby in this scenario?"

Stirewalt says Steele will be going after Cino and Wagner, who worked at the RNC during the Bush years, which many members don't want to revisit. Impossible for Steele to Win, Politico's Alexander Burns and Jonathan Martin report. The reporters talked to RNC members and found "88 members who have decided not to vote for Steele, either opting to support one of his opponents or simply ruling out Steele as a choice in the race. Just as telling, not a single member of the committee said that Steele was their second choice in the race a grave indicator in a contest likely to be decided in multiple ballots. Further, whip counts kept by several of the chairman's opponents suggest the Anybody-but-Steele bloc could be even larger, including as many as 90 to 100 members."

Priebus Is a No-Go, Big Government's Mike Flynn argues. "The 'frontrunner' to succeed [Steele] is Reince Priebus--because Augustus Gloop III wasn't available. Priebus, in addition to being

party chair in WI, is the former right-hand man to Steele. He served as the campaign manager for Steele's run for Chair and then took a staff job as General Counsel at the RNC, which would position him to approve all of Steele's contracts with outside consultants or friends. Which he did, apparently." Flynn adds that Cino lobbied for Pfizer to pass Obamacare. "We absolutely can't have a retread of the Steele/Priebus/Cino cabal. If either of them win, we should create a Big PAC, leverage our own energy and resources, and do our own thing."

More on Priebus' Relationship with Steele "For the most part, there were few RNC members who enjoyed an 'open door' policy with Chairman Steele," conservative blogger Dan Riehl writes. "The main one, who loved to take advantage of his no appointment necessary access will also be in the debate today Reince Priebus. That might give you some idea of just how close and clued in was Priebus when it came to decision-making at the RNC. You know, those decisions that so many people seem to be taking exception to, now, including the Little Prince Priebus? Funny how a guy like the Little Prince can help make decisions and then turn on someone once they sense an opening. Just sayin'."

Members' Second Choice Matters More, The Washington Independent's Patrick Caldwell writes. "[S]ince the RNC chairman is chosen through multiple rounds of balloting until one candidate secures half the votes, the battle to win the election may hinge more on which candidate positions him or herself as the second choice of the most delegates. However, the other candidates do have a significant amount of ground to make up if they are to equal Priebus' level of support. Former RNC Co-Chair Ann Wagner currently sits as the second-place challenger to the incumbent, with 12 public supporters, followed by former Michigan GOP Chair Saul Anuzis with 10 backers and Maria Cino with only six supporters."

Tricky Gender Problem, The Weekly Standard's John McCormack notes. "Wagner may be hurt by the RNC rule that requires the RNC chair and co-chair to be opposite sexes. That means supporters of female co-chair candidates Jan Larimer and Sharon Day will not be inclined to support Wagner for chair. So that rule may give Anuzis an edge over Wagner." □

Cold storm brings Vegas snow, closes I-5 in Calif.

LAS VEGAS – Gamblers on the Las Vegas Strip awoke to snow flurries Monday morning as part of a winter storm that turned the main highway between Southern and Central California into a snowy, icy parking lot.

Hundreds of motorists returning from the New Year's holiday found themselves stuck after Interstate 5 was closed for a second day over the 4,160-foot-high Tejon Pass, about 70 miles north of Los Angeles.

The California Highway Patrol closed a 30-mile stretch of I-5 shortly after 12:30 p.m. Sunday because of blowing snow. Blizzard conditions eased to light snow flurries early Monday but the road remained clogged with snow and patches of ice, and the Highway Patrol said the freeway probably will remain closed for hours as snow plows struggle to clear the mountain route.

"It took us two hours to go five miles," said Charlie Crandall,

who was trying to return north after visiting relatives in San Diego. He and a friend were lucky enough to get hotel rooms nearby, but hundreds more didn't get lodging, and the cars kept coming.

"A lot of people slept in their cars last night," said Crandall, 55.

Other drivers spent hours crawling over Interstate 15's snowy Cajon Pass to get back to Los Angeles from Las Vegas, where there was a trace of snow Monday at the official measuring station near McCarran International Airport.

"You don't come to Las Vegas and think, 'Hey, it's going to snow,'" said Josh Hansen, 22, of Los Angeles, who was posing with friends amid flurries next to the iconic "Welcome to Las Vegas" sign. "It's really weird."

National Weather Service meteorologist John Adair said there won't be any accumulation near the hotels and casinos, but foothills



neighborhoods several miles west of the Strip got one or more inches of snow, and up to 6 inches of snow fell overnight in Pahrump, a high desert community about 60 miles west of Las Vegas.

The weather service predicted more snow at elevations as low as 1,500 feet. On Sunday, suburban Santa Clarita just north of Los Angeles got a rare snowfall.

In Montana and North Dakota,

Amtrak expected to resume normal service Monday after a weekend weather stoppage. Snow, freezing temperatures and subzero wind chills had led Burlington Northern Santa Fe to halt passenger traffic on its tracks, while freight trains ran at slower speeds.

In Utah, officials found the body of a missing hiker Monday morning after the search was halted late Sunday because of cold and dangerous

conditions.

The man fell 80 and 100 feet to his death from a cliff ledge in Snow Canyon State Park north of Santa Clara, KSTU-TV reported. He was among a group of three hikers who became stranded on a hazardous climb.

Authorities rescued the two other men Sunday, Washington County Sheriff-elect Cory Pulsipher told The Spectrum of St. George. □

Pa. allows dumping of tainted waters from gas boom



The natural gas boom gripping parts of the U.S. has a nasty byproduct: wastewater so salty, and so polluted with metals like barium and strontium, that most states require drillers to get rid of the stuff by injecting it down shafts thousands of feet deep. Not in Pennsylvania, one of the states at the center of the gas rush.

There, the liquid that gushes from gas wells is only partially treated for substances that could be environmentally harmful, then dumped into rivers and streams from which communities get their

drinking water.

In the two years since the frenzy of activity began in the vast underground rock formation known as the Marcellus Shale, Pennsylvania has been the only state allowing waterways to serve as the primary disposal place for the huge amounts of wastewater produced by a drilling technique called hydraulic fracturing, or fracking.

State regulators, initially caught flat-footed, tightened the rules this year for any new water treatment plants but allowed any existing operations to continue

discharging water into rivers. At least 3.6 million barrels of the waste were sent to treatment plants that empty into rivers during the 12 months ending June 30, according to state records. That is enough to cover a square mile with more than 8 1/2 inches of brine.

Researchers are still trying to figure out whether Pennsylvania's river discharges, at their current levels, are dangerous to humans or wildlife. Several studies are under way, some under the auspices of the Environmental Protection Agency.

State officials, energy companies and the operators of treatment plants insist that with the right safeguards in place, the practice poses little or no risk to the environment or to the hundreds of thousands of people who rely on those rivers for drinking water.

But an Associated Press review found that Pennsylvania's efforts to minimize, control and track wastewater

discharges from the Marcellus Shale have sometimes failed. For example:

Of the roughly 6 million barrels of well liquids produced in a 12-month period examined by The AP, the state couldn't account for the disposal method for 1.28 million barrels, about a fifth of the total, because of a weakness in its reporting system and incomplete filings by some energy companies.

Some public water utilities that sit downstream from big gas wastewater treatment plants have struggled to stay under the federal maximum for contaminants known as trihalomethanes, which can cause cancer if swallowed over a long period.

Regulations that should have kept drilling wastewater out of the important Delaware River Basin, the water supply for 15 million people in four states, were circumvented for many months.

In 2009 and part of 2010, energy company Cabot Oil & Gas trucked more

than 44,000 barrels of well wastewater to a treatment facility in Hatfield Township, a Philadelphia suburb. Those liquids ultimately were discharged into a creek that provides drinking water to 17 municipalities with more than 300,000 residents. Cabot acknowledged it should not have happened.

People in those communities had been told repeatedly that the watershed was free of gas waste.

"This is an outrage," said Tracy Carluccio, deputy director of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network, an environmental group. "This is indicative of the lack of adequate oversight."

The situation in Pennsylvania is being watched carefully by regulators in other states, some of which have begun allowing some river discharges. New York also sits over the Marcellus Shale, but Gov. David Paterson has slapped a moratorium on high-volume fracking while environmental regulations are drafted. □

Egypt's Pope says state must address Copts woes



Egyptian riot police beat Coptic protesters during clashes following a protest for angry Coptic Egyptians in Cairo, Egypt late Monday, Jan. 3, 2011. The head of Egypt's Coptic Orthodox Church appealed to the government on Monday to address Christians complaints about discrimination to ease tensions as fierce riots broke out in the capital following a New Year's Day church bombing that killed 21 people.

SARAH EL DEEB

Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — The head of Egypt's Coptic Orthodox Church appealed to the government on Monday to address Christians complaints about discrimination to ease tensions as fierce riots broke out in the capital following a New Year's Day church bombing that killed 21 people. The interview with Coptic Pope Shenouda III on state television came as hundreds of predominantly Christian protesters clashed with riot police in northern Cairo in

late night demonstrations expressing frustration with the government's policies.

In rare criticism by the 87-year-old church leader, Shenouda called on the government to address Christian grievances in the country, especially of laws restricting freedom of worship.

"The state also has a duty. It must see to the problems of the Copts and try to resolve them," he said. "If there are laws that is an unjust to some, the state should correct many laws.

The pope said the

unprecedented attack on the Saints Church in Alexandria had "caused panic" among Muslims and Christians, but he appealed for calm among his flock and warned that political activists might use protests to push their anti-government agenda.

"Problems are solved with calm and communication, not with anger and emotions," he said, while acknowledging that the tensions were fed by the Christian community's long-standing grievances.

"There are laws that are painful to some, and despite

our commitment to the laws, the pain is still there, and this needs to be addressed," he said, while counseling patience to Christians.

The bombing touched off three days of protests involving clashes with both security forces and Muslim passers-by in the area around the church in Alexandria.

The community, which makes up 10 percent of Egypt's 80 million, complains bitterly of discrimination in building its churches and in the job market and also feels the government is not confronting rising conservative Islamic prejudice in society.

In northern district of Shubra, police surrounded hundreds of protesters in tight cordons near the neighborhood's main church, while youths dashed out of sidestreets and pelted their armored cars with rocks. Riot police beat the protesters with their batons and an Associated Press photographer on the scene saw at least five people injured including two bleeding from serious head wounds. A priest eventually convinced security forces to open their lines and allow the protesters to disperse.

Protesters also attempted to block a nearby highway with burning tires and threw rocks at passing cars.

In Alexandria, the police cordoned off the area around the church that was attacked

to prevent further protests and enforce calm. Church supporters prevented a local construction company from repairing the damage to the building because parishioners want to keep the blood of the dead on the walls as a reminder, said a local priest.

"They don't want to erase the blood of martyrs," said Father Mena of the Saints Church.

Investigators, meanwhile, said they are focusing on a set of unidentified remains, including a severed head, from the bomb attack that may be linked to the attacker, a security official said.

Typically in suicide bombings, the head of the attacker is flung away by the blast but remains in one piece and police are now trying to reconstruct the face, said the official, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the press.

No group has claimed responsibility for the attack, the worst on Egyptian Christians in a decade, but security officials now say police are looking at homegrown Islamic extremists perhaps were inspired by al-Qaida.

The crime lab investigation found the explosives used were locally made using TNT explosives and were filled with nails and ball bearings to maximize the number of casualties. □

AP Exclusive: Iran invites EU, others to nuke sites

GEORGE JAHN

Associated Press

VIENNA (AP) — Iran has invited Russia, China, the European Union and its allies among the Arab and developing world to tour its nuclear sites, in an apparent move to gain support ahead of a new round of talks with six world powers.

In a letter made available Monday to The Associated Press, senior Iranian envoy Ali Asghar Soltanieh suggests the weekend of Jan. 15 and 16 and says that meetings "with high ranking officials" are envisaged. While no reason was given for the timing of the offer, it comes just weeks before Iran and the six powers follow up on recent talks that ended with agreement on little else but to meet again.

The new round between Tehran, and the permanent U.N. Security Council members — the U.S. Russia, China, Britain, France — plus Germany, is tentatively set for Istanbul, Turkey in late January.

It is meant to explore whether there is common ground for more substantive talks on Iran's nuclear program, viewed by the U.S. and its allies as a cover

for secret plans to make nuclear arms — something Tehran denies. Instead, the Islamic Republic insists its uranium enrichment and other programs are meant only to generate fuel for a future network of nuclear reactors. Diplomats from delegations at the table with Iran during the December talks in Geneva said Tehran made no commitments to talking about U.N. Security Council demands that it freezes uranium enrichment — which can turn out both fuel and fissile warhead material. And Iranian negotiators flatly ruled out discussing such demands at the Istanbul meeting. International worries are great because Tehran developed its enrichment program clandestinely and because it refuses to cooperate with the U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency probe meant to follow up on suspicions that it experimented with components of a nuclear weapons program. Tehran denies such work.

The offer of a visit comes more than three years after six diplomats from developing nations accredited to the IAEA visited Iran's uranium ore conversion site at Isfahan, which turns raw uranium into the

feedstock gas that is then enriched. Participants then told reporters they could not make an assessment of Iran's nuclear aims based on that visit to that facility in central Iran.

But the new offer appeared more wide ranging, both as far as nations or groups invited and sites to be visited.

Dated Dec. 27, the four paragraph letter obtained Monday by the AP offered no details beyond offering an all-expenses paid "visit to Iran's nuclear sites."

But a diplomat familiar with its contents said it was mailed to Russia, China, Egypt, the group of nonaligned nations at the IAEA, Cuba, Arab League members at the IAEA and Hungary, as the president of the rotating EU presidency. The U.S. was not among those invited. China, and to a lesser degree Russia, have acted to dilute originally harsh sanctions measures proposed by the U.S. and its Western Security Council allies, Britain and France, leading to compromise penalties enacted by the council that are milder than the West had originally hoped for. □

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Africa heads offer amnesty to Ivory Coast's Gbagbo

RUKMINI CALLIMACHI
Associated Press

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast (AP) — African leaders on Monday were offering Laurent Gbagbo an amnesty deal on condition he cedes the presidency peacefully to the internationally recognized winner of Ivory Coast's elections, an official said Monday.

The African heads of state traveled to Ivory Coast to give persuasion another chance before resorting to military intervention.

The presidents of Benin, Sierra Leone and Cape Verde also visited last week without result, and this time they were being joined by Kenyan Prime Minister Raila Odinga. No developments were immediately announced.

Results tallied by the country's electoral commission and certified by the United Nations showed Gbagbo lost the November election by a nearly 9-percentage-point margin to opposition leader Alassane Ouattara. Gbagbo has clung to power with the backing of the army, and human rights groups accuse his security forces of abducting and

killing hundreds of political opponents. The U.N. says it also has been barred entry from two suspected mass graves.

U.S. officials said they remain willing to help Gbagbo make a "dignified exit," including revisiting the visa ban so he can travel to the United States and take up a possible teaching position, but only if he agrees to step down. They said the window of opportunity for that, however, is rapidly closing.

Several other countries have also offered to provide a "soft landing" for Gbagbo, but he has refused and now appears to be digging in, officials said. An official from the Kenyan prime minister's office said the renegade Ivorian leader would be guaranteed safety if he agrees to hand over power and chooses to stay in Ivory Coast or go elsewhere. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he did not have permission to speak with the press, did not have further details on the amnesty offer, but said the deal presented by the African leaders was non-negotiable.

The three visiting presidents

represent the Economic Community of West African States, or ECOWAS, a 15-member regional bloc that is threatening military action to seat Ouattara. Kenya's prime minister is representing the African Union.

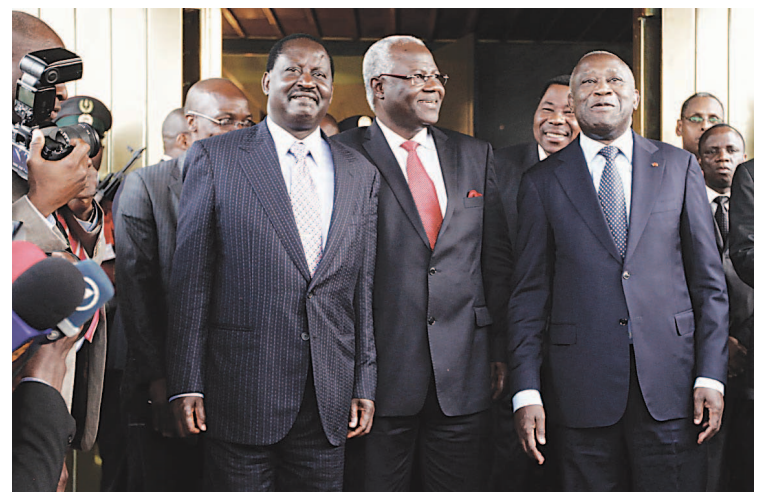
U.S. State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley said the United States supports the envoys' mission.

"We hope that President Gbagbo will listen intently to the message that he needs to step down," Crowley said. "So far, he hasn't. But we certainly endorse what ECOWAS is trying to do today."

Gbagbo has dismissed the international condemnation as "a foreign plot" led by France, the country's former colonizer. In a break with the past though, the African leaders also have taken a stance against one of their own.

Col. Mohammed Yerima, a Nigerian military spokesman, said defense chiefs from ECOWAS members met on Friday to begin strategizing what sort of assault they'd use if talks fail.

President Barack Obama tried to call Gbagbo twice last month, from Air Force



Kenya's Prime Minister Raila Odinga, left, Sierra Leone's President Ernest Bai Koroma, center, and Ivory Coast President Laurent Gbagbo, right, pose for photographers at the presidential palace in Abidjan, Monday, Jan. 3, 2011. African leaders on Monday were offering Laurent Gbagbo an amnesty deal on condition he cedes the presidency peacefully to the internationally recognized winner of Ivory Coast's elections, an official said Monday.

One as Obama returned from Afghanistan and then a week later. Neither call reached Gbagbo; administration officials believe the Ivorian leader sought to avoid contact. So Obama wrote Gbagbo a letter, offering him an international role if he stopped clinging to power and stepped down.

But Obama also made clear that the longer Gbagbo holds on, and the more complicit he becomes in violence across the country, the more limited his options become, said a senior administration official. The official insisted on anonymity to speak about administration strategy. A

Associated Press
Ouattara spokesman also said opportunities for Gbagbo will dwindle if he refuses to go. "People are still saying that if he is ready to step down, the doors are open and there will be places for him to go. We're only asking him to go peacefully," said Patrick Achi. "If he is taken by force, I don't see where he'll be able to go." Gbagbo, who came to power in 2000 and ruled during a brief civil war, overstayed his mandate that expired in 2005, claiming the country was too unstable to organize a poll. The election was finally held after it had been scheduled and then canceled at least six times. □

Crocodiles, snakes are danger in flooded Australia



In this photo released by the Northern Territory Police, four German tourists are safely rescued from the flooded Magela Creek, near Jabiru, Australia, Monday, Jan. 3, 2011. Drenching rain that started before Christmas has flooded an area the size of France and Germany combined.

Associated Press

ROCKHAMPTON, Australia (AP) — Residents of an Australian city cut off by some of the country's worst flooding in decades are being warned to stay out of the water, and not just because of the risk of being swept away: Debris, snakes and even crocodiles could also pose a danger. Large parts of the coastal city of Rockhampton were

underwater Tuesday. The waters were still rising, with the 75,000-strong population bracing for the floods' expected peak in the next 24 hours as a huge inland sea spawned by heavy rain across Queensland state drains toward the ocean. Up to 500 people have been evacuated from their homes along the Fitzroy River,

which runs through the city and has spilled over its banks and inundated houses and businesses in waters ranging from a few inches (centimeters) to waist-deep. Queensland state Premier Anna Bligh said all air, rail and road links to the city had been cut — though local officials said later one highway heading north was still open Tuesday morning. Rockhampton is the latest of 22 cities and towns in Queensland to be swamped by floods that began building just before Christmas — the worst effects of an unusually wet summer in the tropical region. Swollen rivers and flooding have killed 10 people in Queensland since late November, police say. Officials have said the flooded area covers the size of France and Germany combined and 200,000 people have been affected. Authorities have warned residents to stay out of floodwaters for their own

safety, saying the biggest risk is from fast-moving currents powerful enough to sweep cars from roadways — at least two people have drowned after being swept away in their cars. Rockhampton Mayor Brad Carter has also said residents have reported higher than usual numbers of snakes being seen, as the animals move around looking for dry ground. He has also noted that saltwater crocodiles have been spotted from time to time in the Fitzroy River. "We do not think they are a risk to public safety if people keep out of the waters, but if people do enter the waters their safety cannot be guaranteed," Carter was quoted as saying in The Australian newspaper. Animal welfare worker Wendy Hilcher said fears about snakes and crocodiles were hampering her group's efforts to rescue pets left behind by people who had left their homes in flooded areas of the city.

"It's not just the safety aspect of getting to these places, it's what's in the water itself," Hilcher, from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, said. "If it gets too dangerous, we have to get out of there." A military cargo plane landed in a city north of Rockhampton on Monday carrying food, water, medical supplies and other items such as diapers to keep the city stocked with necessities. The goods were being trucked south to the city, or carried on barges. Further flights would continue as needed, acting Defense Minister Warren Snowdon said. Many stores and businesses in dry parts of the city remained open. Power supplies were being severed to inundated areas for safety reasons, officials said. Prime Minister Julia Gillard has said the cost will likely reach many hundreds of millions of dollars, and has announced relief funding worth millions. □

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Seahawks in playoffs stirs debate

By BARRY WILNER

AP Pro Football

Never has the NFL truism "winning the division is our first goal" been more accurate. Just ask the Seattle Seahawks.

Or ask the New York Giants and Tampa Bay Buccaneers, two teams with 10 wins who did not make the playoffs while the 7-9 Seahawks are in. Not only in, but hosting a game next Saturday against the defending Super Bowl champion Saints, who merely went 11-5.

The NFL is enamored of its divisional structure, placing heavy emphasis on intradivision games. So much so that regardless of what's going on elsewhere, a division title is a guarantee to host at least one postseason game.

That's Seattle's reward for a losing record: four of its wins were within the NFC West, better than the Rams' 3-3 mark, making the Seahawks the first division winner with a losing record in league history.

And sparking debate on how fair that is.

"This is not a new issue," NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said last month. "We have considered many alternatives for our playoff format, including the possibility of seeding all playoff teams on the basis of their records once they qualify for the playoffs."

"I'm certain this will get additional consideration by our competition committee and our membership in the offseason. As with any system, there are pluses and minuses."

The Giants know all about the minuses, especially considering their 41-7 manhandling of the Seahawks in Seattle on Nov. 7 — a victory that meant relatively nothing in the playoff breakdown.

"It stinks, that's all I can say," guard Chris Snee said. "You get 10 wins and you think you're a playoff team. We have no one to blame but ourselves."

Continued on Page B4

No longer No. 1

Connecticut coach Geno Auriemma looks on as his team plays Pacific during the first half of an NCAA college basketball game in Stockton, Calif., Tuesday, Dec. 28, 2010.

Page B6



SPORTS

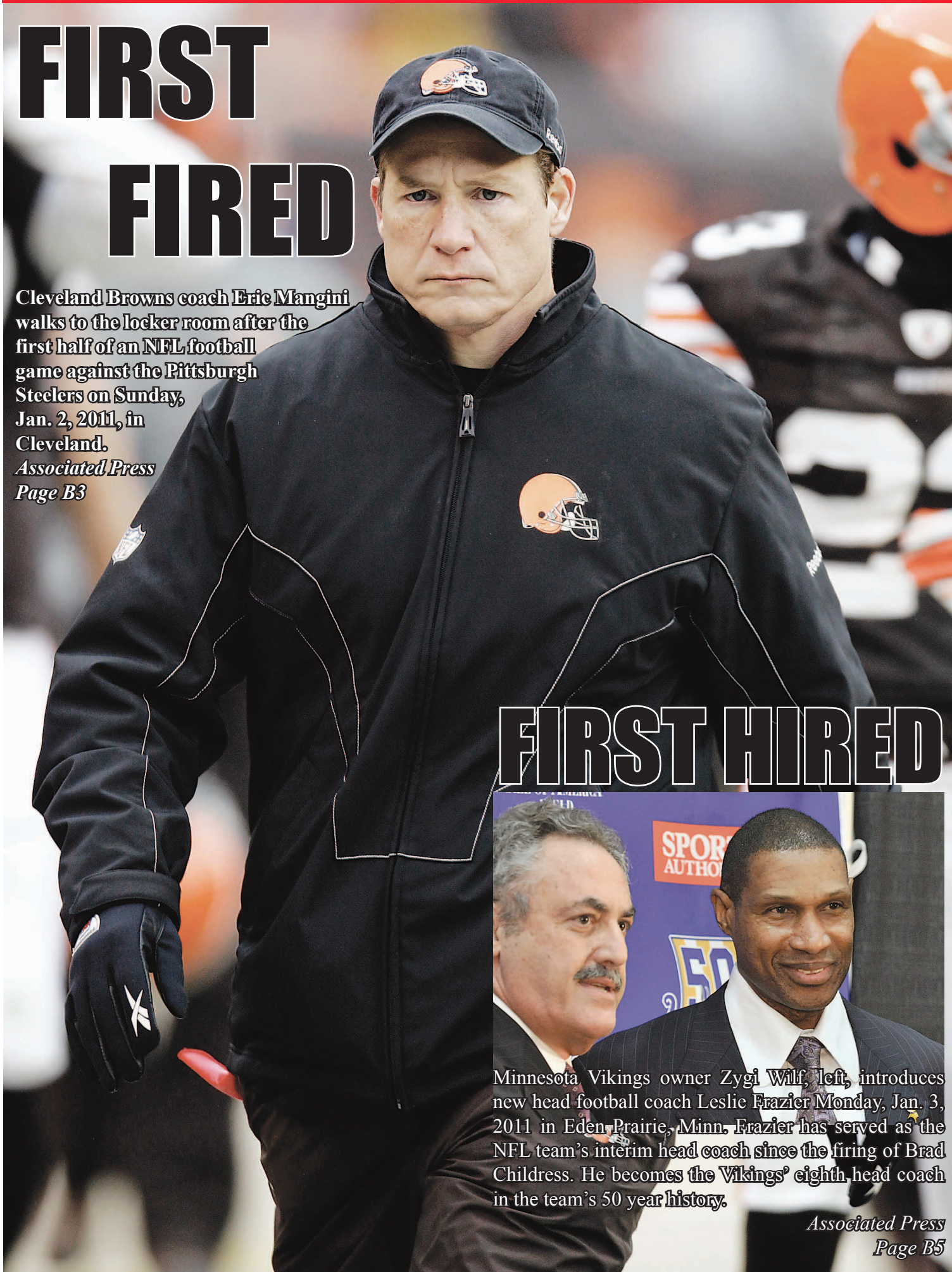
Aruba TODAY

On Top Of The News Email: news@arubatoday.com website: www.arubatoday.com Tuesday, January 4, 2011

FIRST FIRED

Cleveland Browns coach Eric Mangini walks to the locker room after the first half of an NFL football game against the Pittsburgh Steelers on Sunday, Jan. 2, 2011, in Cleveland.

Associated Press
Page B3



FIRST HIRED

Minnesota Vikings owner Zygi Wilf, left, introduces new head football coach Leslie Frazier Monday, Jan. 3, 2011 in Eden Prairie, Minn. Frazier has served as the NFL team's interim head coach since the firing of Brad Childress. He becomes the Vikings' eighth head coach in the team's 50 year history.

Associated Press
Page B5

AP source: Gonzalez agrees to \$80M deal with Rox



In this March 15, 2010 file photo, Colorado Rockies Carlos Gonzalez follows through after hitting for a double in a Cactus League spring training baseball game against the Chicago Cubs in Tucson, Ariz. The publicist for Gonzalez said Monday Jan. 3, 2011, an \$80 million, seven-year contract for the Colorado Rockies outfielder is “practically finalized.”

PAT GRAHAM

AP Sports Writer

DENVER (AP) — Carlos Gonzalez and the Colorado Rockies have agreed to an \$80 million, seven-year contract,

pending a physical.

Even before the agreement was reached, Fabiola Bohorquez, a publicist for the outfielder, confirmed from Venezuela the deal was imminent, pending

a physical. Gonzalez will soon fly to Denver to sign the contract, she said.

A person familiar with the deal, speaking on condition of anonymity because no announcement had been made, said Monday evening that terms had been agreed upon. The Rockies wouldn't confirm the deal, which was first reported by the Denver Post.

“It's not at all finalized. But everything is practically concluded. All that's left are the physical evaluations,” Gonzalez told Meridiano Television in Venezuela.

“It's a blessing for me to have this contract at such a young age,” he added.

Gonzalez had a breakout season in 2010, winning a Silver Slugger award and a Gold Glove. The 25-year-old won the National League batting title with a .336 average and also hit 34 homers and drove in 117 runs despite batting leadoff for 44 games early in the year.

Smooth at the plate, Gonzalez was just as splendid in the field, turning in seemingly effortless

catches as the Rockies shifted him around between all three outfield spots.

Without the agreement, Gonzalez would be eligible for free agency after the 2014 season.

Colorado has been committing large amounts of money this offseason to sign some of its core players.

Jorge De La Rosa, one of the top lefties on the free-agent market, agreed to a \$21.5 million, two-year contract to return to the Rockies.

In November, All-Star shortstop Troy Tulowitzki signed an agreement that guarantees him \$157.75 million over the next decade.

Now, Gonzalez will potentially have protection in the order for quite some time.

In a recent teleconference, Tulowitzki jokingly took a little credit for Gonzalez's late-season run at the Triple Crown because Tulowitzki was hitting behind the player known as “CarGo.”

It was a pick-your-poison option as Tulowitzki turned in a sizzling September, hitting a franchise-best 15 homers and

knocking in 40 runs.

Still, the production of Tulowitzki and Gonzalez, along with the pitching of ace Ubaldo Jimenez, wasn't enough to lift Colorado into the postseason.

This winter, the Rockies brought in versatile infielder Ty Wigginton to replace Melvin Mora, who signed with Arizona.

Gonzalez has been involved in two major trades during his burgeoning career. In December 2007, he was part of the deal that landed pitcher Dan Haren in Arizona and sent Gonzalez to Oakland.

A year later, just as he was settling in with the Athletics, Gonzalez was shipped to Colorado, along with closer Huston Street and lefty Greg Smith, for All-Star slugger Matt Holliday.

Gonzalez has embraced the challenge of replacing Holliday, even if he faltered at first. Gonzalez struggled early in 2009 before helping the Rockies into the playoffs that season.

He's been on quite a roll ever since. □

Champs Sainz, Despres win second stage at Dakar Rally

SAN MIGUEL DE TUCUMAN, Argentina (AP)

— Defending champion Carlos Sainz stretched his lead in the Dakar Rally, winning Monday's second stage to push him further ahead of BMW's Stephane Peterhansel and Volkswagen teammate Nasser Al-Attiyah. Sainz, who won the first stage in cars, covered the second leg in northern Argentina in 3 hours, 11 minutes, 38 seconds. Al-Attiyah was 1:03 behind with Peterhansel 1:34 back. In the overall standings, Sainz is 3:05 up on Peterhansel and has a 3:19 edge on Al-Attiyah.

In bikes, defending champion Cyril Despres on a KTM won the second stage in 3:19:11. Marc Coma, also on a KTM, was 1:49 behind and David Casteu was 3:46 back. In the overall, Despres is 2:35 in

front of Coma and has a 6:13 edge on Ruben Faria.

Faria was the initial winner of the first stage, but was bumped into second by a one-minute penalty for speeding. Despres picked up the victory.

Sainz had problems with his windshield wiper on Sunday, and it happened again on Monday.

“For a dozen kilometers I couldn't see a thing and I had to drive very slowly,” Sainz said. “I'm very disappointed. I've probably lost a lot of time. I don't understand why we still have this problem because the mechanics checked everything yesterday.”

Despite Sainz's problems, Peterhansel said he was always struggling to keep up. “It isn't easy to try and follow Sainz's pace,” Peterhansel



Volkswagen's driver Carlos Sainz and co-driver Lucas Cruz, both from Spain, compete during the second stage of the 2011 Argentina-Chile Dakar Rally between Cordoba and San Miguel de Tucuman, Argentina, Monday, Jan. 3, 2011.

Associated Press

said. “Carlos is slightly quicker than us and we'll perhaps have to wait until the desert to find a chink in his armor.” The race heads north on Tuesday to San Salvador de Jujuy in Argentina and crosses into Chile on

Wednesday, heading for the Atacama desert.

Despres said he got confidence when he noticed he was quicker than Coma, the 2009 champion.

“Today the track was full of bends and very skiddy, like a

300-kilometer giant slalom with jumps. Like skiing,” the Frenchman said. “I noticed at the refueling point that I'd taken almost a minute less than Coma. I was feeling good so I decided to attack a bit in the second part.” □

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Holmgren seeking Browns' fifth coach in 13 years

TOM WITHERS

AP Sports Writer

BEREA, Ohio (AP) — Browns president Mike Holmgren began looking for Cleveland's next coach just hours after firing Eric Mangini.

Holmgren, who won a Super Bowl title with Green Bay and guided Seattle to its only appearance in one, would not rule out coaching again. However, he said Monday that he is not part of the initial search to find a replacement for Mangini, who was dismissed after going 10-22 in two seasons.

"My goal is to find exactly the right person to eventually lead us to the championship," Holmgren said. "I was hired to be the president of the Cleveland Browns. I think this year I've grown into the job.

Having said that, I am also a coach and will always be a coach. To tell you right now that I would never coach again — here or any place — wouldn't be honest.

"But as of right now, my job is to find the best coach available for this job. That's what I'm trying to do. And that does not include me right now."

Holmgren, 62, sent out applications Monday for permission to speak with potential NFL candidates, including those on playoff teams. He said his search will not be limited to only those with pro experience. He has no timetable to find Mangini's replacement but said it's vital to get it right.

"I don't want to do this again," he said, "so I really

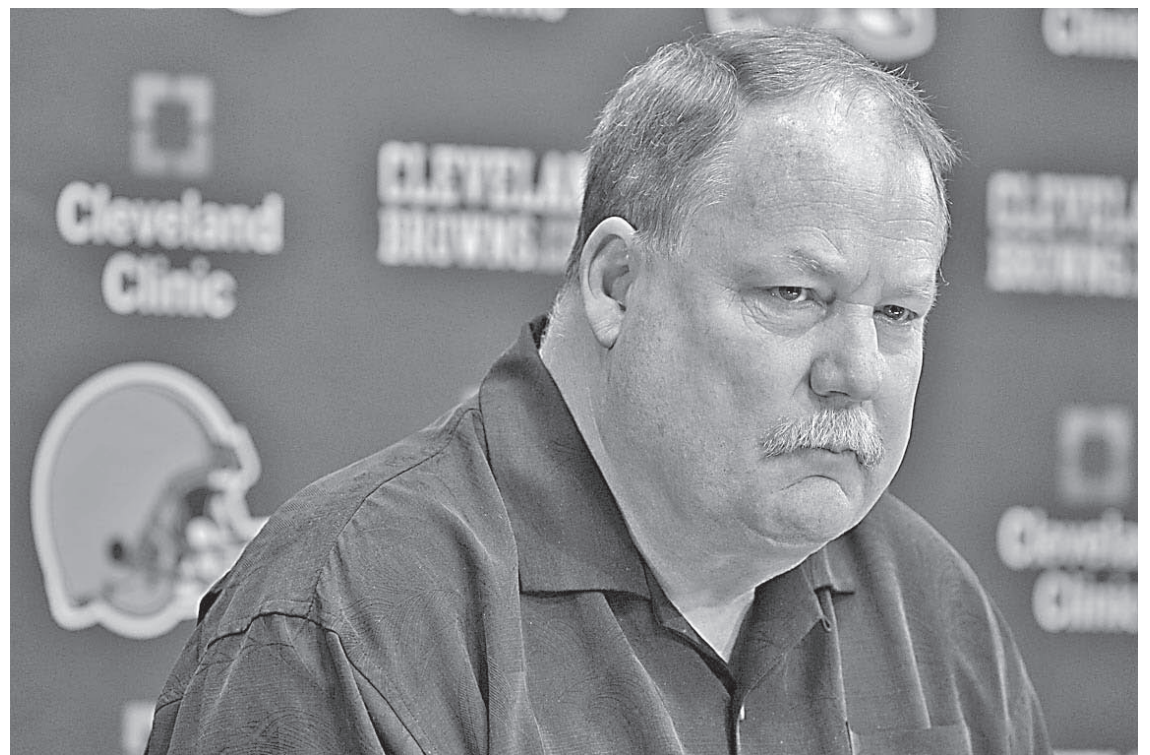
think I have to get this one right — for organization continuity, for the ability to keep people in place for a long period of time to develop the organization."

Cleveland's next coach will be the franchise's fifth since 1999.

Holmgren said no decisions have been made on any of Mangini's assistants. He gave them the rest of this week off and will meet with them next Monday. Defensive coordinator Rob Ryan is reportedly expected to interview for Carolina's vacancy.

Holmgren and general manager Tom Heckert will lead Cleveland's coaching search, which got underway before Mangini had left the building. Holmgren did not reveal names of any candidates and said he has not yet talked to former head coaches Jon Gruden and John Fox, two close friends.

Holmgren said owner Randy Lerner has not given him any



Cleveland Browns president Mike Holmgren talks to the media hours after the team fired head coach Eric Mangini, at the Browns' training facility in Cleveland on Monday, Jan. 3, 2011.

Associated Press

budget restrictions on finding a successor for Mangini, who still has two years left on a contract worth a reported \$8 million.

Although the Browns have been mired in losing and almost constant change,

he believes coaching in Cleveland is attractive to anyone in the profession. "This is one of the great jobs in the country," he said.

"If you're a football coach, that's what you want to be. There is a challenge there that I think appeals to men in this business." □

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SEAHAWK

Continued from Page B1

True. No team blew its chances to win its division worse than New York, which led Philadelphia 31-10 at home midway in the fourth quarter last month and managed to lose 38-31. The Eagles won the NFC East.

Then the Giants fell to Green Bay, which gave the Packers the tiebreaker for the NFC's second wild-card; New Orleans easily earned the first one. "That's how the system is, you know?" Snee said. "When I'm in this position, sure, I can say that ... they should take the top six teams. But one year, maybe it'll be the opposite, and we get in. You can't really control that. It's just the way the system is — and we didn't win the games that we had to win."

Any chance the system might change?

As Goodell mentioned, this topic comes up occasionally at owners meetings. It's more certain than ever to be raised in March at the main league

meetings in New Orleans, perhaps brought up by the Giants or Bucs.

But the likelihood of diminishing the importance of division races is negligible. After all, the NFL got a winner-take-all matchup in prime time for the final game of the year. Under a format where, say, the top six teams in the conference make the postseason regardless of divisions, St. Louis-Seattle would have been totally ignorable.

So might have been the Colts' win over the Titans on Sunday to take the AFC South. The division races tend to prolong the drama through to Week 17. One tweak that could be coming is for a wild-card team with a better record than a division winner being the host for a playoff game. This weekend, all four road teams could stake claims to deserving to be the host.

Not only are the Saints four games better than the Seahawks — a team they routed 34-19 in November



Seattle Seahawks' Will Herring (54) celebrates along with Aaron Curry, right, after intercepting a pass from St. Louis Rams' Sam Bradford in the second half of an NFL football game, Sunday, Jan. 2, 2011, in Seattle. The Seahawks won 16-6.

Associated Press

Hester sets record with punt-return average

LAKE FOREST, Ill. — Add this to the list of NFL records for Chicago's Devin Hester — highest punt return average in a season.

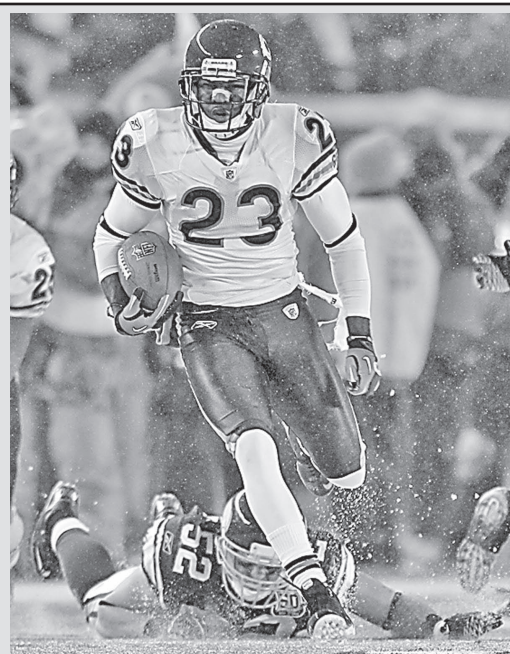
The Bears' speedy return specialist averaged 17.1 yards, the highest in league history among players with at least 30 returns. He also set the career record for combined kick return touchdowns last month with his 14th, returning to form after struggling the past few years while trying to adapt to a bigger role at wide receiver. Hester has returned 33 punts for 564 yards and three TDs. His average topped the previous mark of 16.1 set by Jermaine Lewis of Baltimore in 2000.

Hester's resurgence is a big reason the Bears (11-5) won the NFC North and made the playoffs for the first time in four years.

He had gone two seasons without returning a punt or kickoff for a touchdown after running back 11 to the end zone in his first two seasons. That drought ended when he took a punt 62 yards against Green Bay in late September.

Hester broke Brian Mitchell's record for combined kick return TDs with a 64-yard punt return against Minnesota on Dec. 20. That gave him 10 punt return touchdowns in his career, tying Eric Metcalf's record.

Not included in Hester's 14 kick return TDs are a missed field goal that he ran back 108 yards, and the touchdown on the opening kickoff of the Super Bowl four years ago. □



Chicago Bears' Devin Hester (23) breaks away from Minnesota Vikings' Chad Greenway (52) for a 64-yard touchdown on a punt return during the second half an NFL football game Monday, Dec. 20, 2010, in Minneapolis. The return was Hester's NFL-leading 14th career return for a touchdown.

Associated Press

— but the Jets (11-5) have a better record than their hosts on Saturday, the Colts (10-6). Same for the Ravens (12-4) and Chiefs (10-6).

The Packers and Eagles both are 10-6, with Green Bay beating Philadelphia in the season opener. Yet the wild-card game on Sunday is in Philly.

Maybe all of this simply is an aberration.

"This is an unusual year in which a team won the division with a not outstanding record," Giants coach Tom Coughlin said. "Well, maybe it's just a different and unusual year. I don't know. From a standpoint of the league and the overall, I don't have any complaints with the system. From a standpoint of being selfish right now, yeah, we'd like to be playing, sure." □

Vikings hire Leslie Frazier as head coach

By DAVE CAMPBELL

AP Sports Writer

EDEN PRAIRIE, Minn.

— The Minnesota Vikings have reached an agreement with Leslie Frazier to be their next coach.

The Vikings announced Monday they're removing the interim tag from Frazier's title. Frazier took over on Nov. 22 when Brad Childress was fired, and the Vikings went 3-3 under the 51-year-old after a 3-7 start. The defensive coordinator under Childress and a former cornerback for the Bears, Frazier drew positive reviews from the players for his steady approach. They've pushed for him to get the job on a permanent basis, after many of them grew frustrated with Childress and his rigid style.

Frazier is the eighth coach in the franchise's 50-year history.

"Our players and entire organization have great respect for Leslie," owner Zygi Wilf said in a statement released by the team. "He has a vast knowledge of the game, both as a former player and as a coach, and he has a terrific way with those who play for him and work with him."

Already mired in a mess of

a season that started with a Super Bowl-or-bust goal, the Vikings lost quarterback Brett Favre to a shoulder injury on Dec. 5. Then, the roof of their domed stadium collapsed a week later; they had back-to-back home games moved; and their scheduled Dec. 26 game at Philadelphia was pushed back two days by a snowstorm.

"He's a great leader. He's a player's coach, and he's somebody people would like playing for," wide receiver Percy Harvin said before the news became official.

Childress hired Frazier to run the defense in 2007 after Mike Tomlin left to become Pittsburgh's coach and later appointed him assistant head coach. Frazier has interviewed for seven coaching vacancies over the past three years.

"I like obviously playing for him," said linebacker Chad Greenway, one of several key players whose contracts are expiring. "I've played for him every year I've been the starter here. If he's going to be here, that's obviously a good thing on the comfort level."

Frazier addressed the players in a season-ending meeting on Monday



Minnesota Vikings interim coach Leslie Frazier directs his team in the second half of an NFL football game against the Philadelphia Eagles, Tuesday, Dec. 28, 2010, in Philadelphia. Minnesota won 24-14.

Associated Press

morning.

"He's always seemed like a head coach ever since he took over that role," left tackle Bryant McKinnie said. "He knows how to talk to you, and he respects you."

Frazier has been coaching in the NFL since 1999. He's been an assistant with Philadelphia, Cincinnati and Indianapolis. The native of Columbus, Mo., played at Alcorn State and broke in with the Bears in 1981.

"I think he's proven it in a number of ways, a number

of areas, and seeing the way the guys respond to him in the locker room I think it's a good fit," linebacker Ben Leber said.

Frazier said he "could not have asked for a better opportunity" in the NFL.

"He played in the league,

first of all," running back Adrian Peterson said after Sunday's season-ending loss at Detroit. "He has all of the respect from each and every man in this locker room. So when he talks, the ears will listen to what he has to say." □

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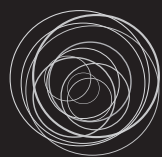
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Report: Diana Taurasi's B sample also positive



This Sept. 29, 2010, file photo shows Diana Taurasi, of Team USA, right, looking to pass as Jenna O'Hea of Australia, left, defends during their World Basketball Championship round of 16 match in Ostrava, Czech Republic.

Associated Press

SUZAN FRASER

Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — Diana Taurasi's backup doping sample also came back positive for a banned substance and the American basketball star faces a possible two-year ban, Turkish news reports said Monday.

The Turkish basketball federation did not immediately confirm the reports by the Dogan News agency and private NTV news channel, and neither news outlet cited a source for their reports. An official at Taurasi's Turkish club, Fenerbahce, also would not confirm the report and said the team had not yet been notified of the result.

WNBA standout and former University of Connecticut star Taurasi tested positive for the stimulant modafinil while playing in Turkey's professional women's league. She was tested following

a league game on Nov. 13 and the positive result was confirmed last month.

Taurasi had been provisionally suspended by Fenerbahce pending the result of her "B" sample test, which was analyzed at the doping lab at Hacettepe University in Ankara.

Modafinil is used to counter excessive sleepiness due to narcolepsy, shift-work sleep disorder or sleep apnea, according to drug manufacturers.

The stimulant has been involved in several major doping cases, including that of U.S. sprinter Kelli White, and is on the World Anti-Doping Agency's list of banned substances.

White won the 100- and 200-meter races at the 2003 world championships in Paris, but both her medals were stripped after she tested positive for the stimulant.

If the positive "B" sample finding is confirmed by Turkey's basketball federation, it could lead to a ban of up to two years for Taurasi. It could also put Taurasi's 2012 Olympics standing with the U.S. national basketball team in jeopardy. She has helped the team win gold medals at the past two Olympics and was the leading scorer at the women's world championships, which the Americans won in early October.

The International Olympic Committee bars any athlete given a doping penalty of six months or more from competing in the next games.

Meanwhile, two of Taurasi's teammates at Fenerbahce resisted doping tests in Turkey because they do not trust the lab that tested her samples, Turkey's Haberturk newspaper said.

Australian forward Penny Taylor and Hana Horakova of the Czech Republic provided samples only after the Turkish federation agreed to send them to Germany for testing at a lab in Cologne.

The two players were tested after Fenerbahce's Turkish league game against Besiktas late Sunday.

A Fenerbahce official confirmed the report.

Taurasi led the WNBA in scoring for a league-record fourth straight year, averaging 22.6 points per game. The five-time All-Star and two-time WNBA champion signed a multiyear contract extension with the Phoenix Mercury in August.

She played in Russia for four years for powerhouse Spartak before joining the Turkish League this season. Taurasi was leading the league in scoring this season with 24.6 points a game.

Taurasi is one of many WNBA stars who play overseas in the winter because of higher salaries. □

UConn no longer No. 1 as Baylor tops women's poll

By DOUG FEINBERG

AP Basketball Writer

UConn's run at No. 1 is over.

The Huskies' NCAA-record 90-game winning streak ended Thursday night with a loss to Stanford. Their nearly three-year hold on the top ranking ended Monday when they were overtaken by Baylor and dropped to No. 2 in The Associated Press poll. Connecticut had been the top team for a record 51 straight weeks, beginning Feb. 18, 2008.

Baylor, which lost 65-64 at Connecticut in mid-November, is No. 1 for the first time. Star Brittney Griner and the Lady Bears, who received 23 first place votes, next play on Saturday when they host No. 17 Iowa State in their Big 12 opener.

"It's great, positive recognition for our program and Baylor University," Baylor coach Kim Mulkey said. "We welcome it as every coach in America does, but we'll keep it in perspective. At this point in the season what does it really mean?"

The Lady Bears are only the second Big 12 team to ascend to No. 1, joining Texas. The Longhorns have done it numerous times, including for two weeks in the middle of February 2004.

"It's just going to be business as usual for us," Mulkey said. "It won't matter to this class as they've never won a Big 12 championship or national championship. No. 1, No. 5 or not ranked at all, they're confident in what they

want to do."

UConn, which had been a unanimous No. 1 for all but one of the last 40 weeks, was second, receiving 14 first place ballots. The Huskies host Villanova on Wednesday.

Duke, Stanford and Tennessee round out the first five. The Cardinal moved up five places after routing then-No. 4 Xavier and beating UConn.

The Blue Devils will play No. 10 Kentucky on Tuesday. Duke is one of four unbeaten teams left along with No. 6 West Virginia, eighth-ranked North Carolina and unranked Florida Gulf Coast.

Texas A&M was seventh and Xavier was ninth. The Musketeers dropped five spots after getting blown out at Stanford.

Michigan State was 11th followed by UCLA, Notre Dame, Maryland, and Georgetown.

DePaul moved up five places to 16th despite not playing this week. The Blue Demons' game against NJIT had been postponed because of the major snow storm that hit the East Coast. DePaul hosts Providence before visiting No. 18 St. John's on Saturday. Oklahoma fell four spots to 19th after losing at TCU on Sunday.

Ohio State and Iowa had the biggest drop in the poll, each falling seven spots. The Buckeyes lost to Duquesne and Michigan while the Hawkeyes were beaten by Penn State and the Wolverines. Texas, Syracuse, Florida State and Arkansas rounded out the poll as no team dropped out of the Top 25 this week. □

Heikkinen and Haag win fourth stage

OBERSTDORF, Germany (AP) — Matti Heikkinen of Finland won the fourth stage of the Tour de Ski while Anna Haag of Sweden took victory in the women's race on Monday but the overall event standings did not change.

Heikkinen claimed the best time on the second portion of the 20-kilometer mixed classic and free pursuit to win in a total time of 49 minutes 20.1 seconds.

Overall Tour de Ski leader Dario Cologna of Switzerland finished second, a second back from Heikkinen, while Czech Martin Jaks was third, 4.9 seconds adrift.

Cologna extended his lead in the Tour standings with a time of 1 hour 37 minutes 51.0 seconds. Second is Devon Kershaw of Canada, who is 45.9 seconds back after taking seventh place. Marcus Hellner of Sweden is third, 1:06.1 minutes behind.

The second place finish also allowed Cologna to overtake Alexander Legkov in the overall World Cup standings with 642 points to Legkov's 640 after the Russian finished eighth.

In the women's 10-kilometer race, Haag was third best in the classic and fifth fastest in the free to win overall in a time of 26 minutes 59.8 seconds. □



In a Jan. 5, 2010 file photo, John Isner of the United States plays against Australia's Lleyton Hewitt during their men's singles match at the Hopman Cup tennis tournament in Perth, Australia. Isner defeated Nicolas Mahut 6-3, 7-6 (5) Monday, Jan. 3, 2011 at the Hopman Cup in the first rematch since their 11-hour epic at Wimbledon.

Associated Press

Isner beats Mahut _ in just 90 minutes this time

ALEXANDRA WILLIS

Associated Press

PERTH, Australia (AP) — John Isner beat Nicolas Mahut 6-3, 7-6 (5) at the Hopman Cup Monday in their first rematch since their 11-hour epic at Wimbledon last year.

Isner overcame Mahut in 90 minutes to give the U.S. an insurmountable 2-0 lead over France. The match lasted 9½ hours and 161 games less than their previous record-breaking encounter. The Wimbledon match, the longest-ever in professional tennis history, stretched over three days and finished at 70-68 in the fifth set. A repeat was never likely in any event but the 19th-ranked Isner started the stronger in Perth, breaking Mahut immediately, and held firm to take the first set 6-3.

Mahut, who is only in the French team after replacing the injured Gael Monfils, bounced back in the second, hitting just four unforced errors to the American's 20, but could not make any inroads into Isner's serve. Neck and neck in the second set tiebreak, it was Isner who converted the opportunity.

"Had I lost that second set it

might have gone four hours so I was lucky to finish it in two," Isner said. "For the first match of the year I was pretty pleased with how I played."

"I got on top of him early in the first set, he picked up his game in the second, but I stayed the course with mine. I didn't get to break, but fortunately for me I came up with my best serves. It's always an honor to share the court with him."

Isner's victory Monday came after Bethanie Mattek-Sands defeated former top-ranked junior Kristina Mladenovic 3-6, 6-3, 6-1 to give the U.S. a 1-0 lead in the team event.

The 56th-ranked American, dressed in black knee-high socks and basketball shoes, recovered from dropping the opening set against an opponent ranked 301st, and secured an early break in the second set. Although Mladenovic took the break back, Mattek-Sands continued to disrupt her rhythm, and secured the set.

The third set, in which Mladenovic received treatment for a knee injury, was one-way traffic in favor of the American, who replaced the injured Serena Williams.

"She's a great player," Mattek-Sands said of Mladenovic. "I've never played her before. It's tough going out there and not playing someone that you're used to seeing across the net. So I had to go out there and make my own game plan as I went."

"She came out crushing the ball. She wasn't afraid to come in and take balls on the rise, which is normally my game. Toward the end of the second set and the third, I switched that around and started coming in more."

Mattek-Sands and Isner are due to complete the tie with the mixed doubles against Mladenovic and Mahut.

The U.S. and France are in Group B along with Britain and Italy.

In the day's earlier matchup, Potito Starace and Francesca Schiavone beat Andy Murray and Laura Robson in the deciding mixed doubles match 6-7 (1), 7-6 (6), 7-6 (2) to give Italy a 2-1 win over Britain.

Schiavone beat the 16-year-old Robson 7-5, 6-3 in women's singles to give Italy the early lead before Murray opened his 2011 season strong with a 7-5, 6-1 win over Starace. □



Austria's Thomas Morgenstern celebrates after his first jump of the third station of the four hills ski jumping tournament in Innsbruck, Austria, on Monday, Jan. 3, 2011.

Associated Press

Morgenstern wins 3rd Four Hills event

INNSBRUCK, Austria (AP) — Thomas Morgenstern won the third stop of the Four Hills tournament Monday to extend his lead in the prestigious ski jumping competition.

The Austrian, who also won the opening event in Oberstdorf, Germany, last week, now holds a major 27.3-point lead — approximately 15 meters — over second-place Simon Ammann of Switzerland going into the final event on Thursday in Bischofshofen, Austria.

"It's a great feeling to have that big lead, but we saw in Garmisch-Partenkirchen how quickly things can change," said Morgenstern, referring to Saturday's event, where the final round was canceled due to fierce winds.

Morgenstern called it "a very emotional win" in front of a home crowd at the Bergisel hill.

The 24-year-old Morgenstern could become the third straight Austrian winner of the Four Hills competition after Wolfgang Loitzl in 2008-09 and Andreas Kofler last season.

It would be the first time a single nation has won three tournaments in a row since Norwegian Bjoern Tore Wirkola captured the 1966-67 to 1968-69 events. □

Sepp Blatter to create FIFA anti-corruption committee



FIFA President Sepp Blatter at a news conference in Johannesburg, Monday, Dec. 13, 2010. Blatter has used the official closing of the World Cup in South Africa to defend his organization's decision to award future tournaments to first-time hosts Russia and Qatar.

ZURICH (AP) — FIFA President Sepp Blatter is to set up a new committee to ensure his organization is free of corruption after scandals surrounding the votes for World Cup hosting. An independent anti-corruption committee would improve FIFA's credibility, Blatter told Swiss newspaper Sonntags Zeitung.

"I will take care of it personally, to ensure there is no corruption at FIFA," Blatter said. He aims to present the project to FIFA's congress of 208 football nations in June, where he will stand for presidential re-election seeking a fourth four-year term in office. "This committee will strengthen our credibility and

Associated Press give us a new image," said Blatter, who acknowledged last month that FIFA "can't go on like this" after the World Cup voting process damaged the governing body's reputation. FIFA officials were accused of bribe-taking and vote-trading before the 2018 and 2022 World Cup elections last month. Russia and Qatar, respectively, were

awarded the tournaments. FIFA's ethics court investigated and barred two of the 24-member executive committee, Amos Adamu and Reynald Temarii, from voting based on evidence provided from an undercover sting by British newspaper, The Sunday Times. Adamu, from Nigeria, became the first FIFA official suspended for bribery, and is serving a three-year ban from all football duty. Temarii, a FIFA vice president from Tahiti, was given a one-year ban for breaching rules on confidentiality and loyalty. Both men have said they will appeal their sentences. Four former FIFA executive committee members — Slim Aloulou of Tunisia, Amadou Diakite of Mali, Ismail Bhamjee of Botswana and Ahongalu Fusimalohi of Tonga — were all suspended for between two and four years after they advised undercover reporters how much to pay FIFA voters in bribes. In his interview Sunday, Blatter did not specify what investigative powers the anti-corruption committee would have or how it would work alongside the existing ethics

panel. Blatter said he expected the anti-corruption body to include up to nine officials, some selected from the worlds of politics, finance, business and culture. While FIFA has completed its own investigations, it faces further problems pending the outcome of an International Olympic Committee corruption probe. The IOC's ethics commission is studying evidence provided by Britain's state broadcaster, the BBC, after it broadcast allegations that FIFA officials — some with Olympic connections — took kickbacks from its former marketing partner in the 1990s. The BBC alleged that secret payments were received by three long-standing members of FIFA's ruling committee, including African football president Issa Hayatou in 1995. Hayatou, from Cameroon, became an IOC member in 2001. The program also alleged that payments were made to former FIFA president Joao Havelange. The 94-year-old Brazilian is the IOC's longest-serving member with 47 years in the movement. □

Beckham waiting for Galaxy to approve loan move



In this Nov. 27, 2010 file photo, LA Galaxy's David Beckham is seen during a match against the Newcastle Jets at EnergyAustralia Stadium in Newcastle, Australia. Tottenham wants former England captain Beckham to play on loan for the Premier League club. "It's whether (Los Angeles) Galaxy will let him go on loan," Spurs manager Harry Redknapp was quoted as saying in British media reports on Saturday, Jan 1, 2011.

ROB HARRIS
AP Sports Writer

LONDON (AP) — David Beckham is still waiting

for the Los Angeles Galaxy to approve a loan move to a European club, with Tottenham among the clubs

keen to sign the former England captain. Having earlier ruled out spending a third consecutive Major League Soccer offseason at another club, Beckham announced two weeks ago that he needed to continue playing during the winter to stay in contention for an England recall. But the Galaxy responded by insisting that they expect Beckham — and all their players — back at the end of January ahead of the March 15 season opener. The team's reluctance stems from Beckham missing the first six months of the 2010 season after injuring an Achilles' tendon last March while playing for AC Milan. Tottenham, though, is pursuing Beckham's signature even if he would only be available for the Premier League club for two months.

"At the moment we are waiting on the decision of LA Galaxy with regards to a loan move," Beckham's management company said in a statement. "The loan would be a short one until the start of the MLS season. David would then return and play a full season with the Galaxy. "Tottenham are one of many clubs who are interested but as yet we have not got into any detailed conversations as we are waiting on LA Galaxy's decision." The Galaxy declined to comment on Monday. While Tottenham manager Harry Redknapp has already made clear his interest, he said over the weekend that "whether they will let him move I wouldn't be sure — it's probably 50-50." Redknapp said Beckham singled out Spurs as the club he wanted to join after the former

Manchester United player talked with the manager's son, Jamie, who is also a former England midfielder. But Jamie Redknapp said "there are too many obstacles" to a deal being done. Beckham, who is entering the final season of his five-year \$32.5 million Galaxy contract, still hopes to return to Fabio Capello's England side. He made the last of his 115 international appearances against Belarus in October 2009 and missed last year's World Cup because of the Achilles injury. Beckham previously said the only Premier League team he would consider playing for was Manchester United, which he left in 2003 to join Real Madrid. Beckham's late grandfather Joseph West supported Tottenham, which hosts United in the league on Jan. 16. □

Report: Facebook nets \$500 million investment

By BARBARA ORTUTAY,
AP Technology Writer

NEW YORK — A reported investment by Goldman Sachs and a Russian investor of \$500 million in Facebook is a further sign that the social networking behemoth is becoming a powerful force even outside tech circles, even as the company tries to push off going public as long as possible.

The investment implies that the company is worth \$50 billion, according to the report — more than twice the market valuation of Yahoo Inc., though still well below its famous Silicon Valley rival, Google Inc.

The New York Times reported the investment over the weekend, citing unnamed people involved with the deal. Facebook and Goldman Sachs declined to comment Monday. Russian investor Digital Sky Technologies already has a small stake in Facebook, but the investment from Goldman Sachs is a sign of just how big the Palo Alto, Calif.-based startup has become in the nearly seven years since it was born in CEO Mark Zuckerberg's Harvard dorm room.

Wedbush Morgan analyst Lou Kerner, who's been bullish on

social media and Facebook in particular, said Facebook is worth the \$50 billion the investment implies.

He said that amount is 15 percent less than the going rate on private stock exchanges, and just half of what Kerner thinks Facebook's shares would trade at if the company were to go public.

Shares of privately held companies can be traded on private stock exchanges such as SecondMarket and SharesPost. The shares are generally sold by former employees or early investors in these companies. Only institutional investors or high net-worth individuals — those worth more than \$1 million — can buy the shares.

On SharesPost, a completed contract between a buyer and a seller valued shares Facebook at \$25 each. This implies a valuation of nearly \$57 billion for the world's largest social network, with 500 million-plus users worldwide.

While the market for Facebook's shares is hot, it's not guaranteed that the company's shares would be worth on the public market what they go for in private exchanges.

Not that Facebook is in any rush to go public. Zuckerberg,

26, has long been coy about a possible initial public offering, recently telling CBS' "60 Minutes" that he doesn't see selling the company or going public as an end goal, as a lot of people seem to.

"(It's) like you win when you go public. And that's just not how I see it," he said on Dec. 5.

There are many reasons for Facebook to put off an IPO, a big one being that it doesn't need the money, as the latest investment shows. Companies go public to get access to capital, and Facebook clearly has access to capital, Kerner said. Becoming public also requires a "significant time commitment" from a company's senior management that they could otherwise spend running the company, he added. Zuckerberg has been deeply involved with running Facebook since its founding and shows no signs of wanting to give that up to cash out. He's even pledged to give away at least half of his wealth along with a slew of much older billionaires such as Carl Icahn and Barry Diller. And Facebook, which already faces government scrutiny for the way it handles the troves of personal information its users share through its tools,



FILE - In this May, 26, 2010 file photo, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg talks about the social network site's new privacy settings in Palo Alto, Calif. Facebook has raised \$500 million from Goldman Sachs and a Russian investment firm in a deal that values the company at \$50 billion, The New York Times reported. Goldman invested \$450 million and Digital Sky Technologies invested \$50 million, the newspaper reported Sunday in its online edition, citing people involved in the transaction that it did not name. Goldman has the right to sell part of its stake, up to \$75 million, to the Russian firm.

(AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez, File)

would be subject to even more poring eyes were it to go public, Kerner noted.

"If I'm Facebook, I don't think I ever want to go public," he said.

The company discloses very limited financial information now, but this could change if the number of its shareholders hits 500. At that point, Securities and Exchange Commission rules would kick

in requiring it to disclose more numbers, even if it doesn't go public. The company has been trying to prevent this from happening. It bars current employees from selling their shares, for example.

Facebook hasn't said whether it's profitable, though in 2009 it said it was "cash-flow positive," meaning it was bringing in more money than it was spending. □



In this photo taken Wednesday, Dec. 1, 2010, Chicago Cut steakhouse managing partner Matt Moore browses the restaurant's wine list on an iPad in Chicago. The restaurant is just one eatery of several across the U.S. that have started uploading menus and wine lists to the digital devices.

(AP Photo/Charles Rex Arbogast)

By CARYN ROUSSEAU,
Associated Press

CHICAGO — The bar is buzzing on a busy night at Chicago Cut steakhouse as regulars Keith and Peg Bragg

sit at a high table scanning the wine list.

Within seconds, they have all bottles under \$40 at their fingertips using an iPad supplied by their server.

Restaurants uploading menus on iPads for diners

"You can very quickly look through to see the price per bottle," said Keith, a finance executive, as he scrolled through rows of selections. "You can read the wine tasting note, how long it has been aged."

The upscale eatery on the northern bank of the Chicago River has invested in 40 iPads at about \$700 each for wine selection. Since April, when Apple debuted the tablet, the device is now in use as a full menu at upscale restaurants, hamburger eateries and quick-service chains like Au Bon Pain. Restaurateurs said that's just the beginning.

Chicago Cut partnered with a technology firm to create a custom app that looks like a virtual wine cellar. It lists the restaurant's more than 750 wines, includes photos

of bottles on wooden shelves and allows for searches based on variety, price or region of origin. Diners can also access information about a wine's taste, composition and a Google map of the vineyard. "Eventually the bottle is going to spin around and you can read the back label," said Chicago Cut managing partner Matt Moore. In the future, programmers could add video or let customers e-mail themselves the name of a new favorite wine.

Moore's partner, David Flom, said the iPads were a large investment, but they're already showing returns.

"I've already seen an increase of wine per customer of 20 percent," Flom said. "I can't say that the iPad commanded 100 percent, but I can say it commanded a significant

portion of that."

Technology is becoming increasingly important to restaurants and tabletop ordering devices only stand to multiply, said Darren Tristano, executive vice president at the Chicago-based restaurant consulting firm Technomic.

"It's cool and trendy and kids love it," he said. "It paves the way for other opportunities with applications."

Au Bon Pain uses iPads at six of its 220 locations, with plans to expand. Ed Frechette, the company's vice president of marketing in Boston, said diners usually fill out pieces of paper with their orders at the cafes, but iPads have simplified the process.

"One of our employees has an iPad with a menu loaded in it and they'll take your order," Frechette said. □

Docs trying to avoid amputation for Zsa Zsa Gabor



FILE - This May 1, 1990 file photo shows Zsa Zsa Gabor in a courtroom in Beverly Hills, Calif. A representative for Gabor said Sunday Jan. 2, 2011 that she is back in a Los Angeles hospital to have part of her leg amputated.

(AP Photo/Kevork Djansezian, File)

LOS ANGELES – Doctors are treating Zsa Zsa Gabor with powerful antibiotics in hopes of avoiding amputating part of her leg.

Her publicist, John Blanchette, said Monday that the 93-year-old actress would continue receiving treatment at Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center over the next couple days. Her husband, Prince Frederic von Anhalt, brought her to the hospital Sunday night and doctors thought they might have to amputate part of her right leg below the knee because of the onset of gangrene.

“The lesion is apparently very deep. They’re afraid it may be into the bone, which would not be good,” Blanchette said. “Before taking that drastic measure, they want to give it one last chance with some

really powerful antibiotics.”

Blanchette added that the lesion has grown from about an inch a couple months ago to almost a foot now.

Gabor broke her hip and had replacement surgery in July, and has been hospitalized several times since for swelling in her legs and blood clots throughout her body. She was in critical condition and asked for a priest to read her last rites during a hospital visit in August, but she recovered and returned home.

Gabor has used a wheelchair since she was partially paralyzed in a 2002 car accident, and she had a stroke in 2005.

She retreated from the spotlight after the accident and stroke. She liked staying home and watching soap operas, game shows and

old movies, von Anhalt told reporters in July. She detested having her picture taken by the paparazzi while she was in her wheelchair.

“She wants people to remember her as she was years ago,” he said.

A Hungarian-born sex symbol of the 1950s and 1960s, Gabor had a brief and unremarkable film career, appearing in films ranging from “Moulin Rouge” in 1952 to “Queen of Outer Space” in 1958, and she had no regular television role like her sister Eva had on “Green Acres.”

Her primary role was herself — appearing on TV specials and game shows, as a guest on several television series, and in real-life dramas like her slapping of a Beverly Hills policeman in 1989 that led to a brief jail term.

Oscar-nominated star Pete Postlethwaite dies at 64



FILE -A Wednesday, June 9, 2004 photo from files showing British actor Peter Postlethwaite displaying his Order of the British Empire or OBE, shortly after the presentation at Buckingham Palace in London. Britain’s Press Association is reporting Monday, Jan. 3, 2011 that decorated film actor Pete Postlethwaite has died at the age of 64. It quotes longtime friend Andrew Richardson as saying Monday that Postlethwaite died in hospital in Shropshire, central England, after a long illness. Richardson said Postlethwaite died Sunday. He had been receiving treatment for cancer.

(AP Photo /Kirsty Wigglesworth/ Pool)

By GREGORY KATZ, Associated Press

LONDON – He could have stayed in teaching.

That’s what his parents

wanted: it was the safe, secure route for a young man with working-class roots and a face few would describe as handsome.

But Pete Postlethwaite wanted more. He wanted to pursue his passion for acting and, at 24, he left teaching to train at the Bristol Old Vic theater. His parents remained skeptical, but when he was introduced to Queen Elizabeth II after a stellar 1980s performance with the Royal Shakespeare Company, even his mother was convinced he would make his mark.

It was an incredible ascent for Postlethwaite, a distinguished character actor with a remarkably craggy, timeworn face whose death at age 64 was confirmed Monday by Andrew Richardson, a longtime friend and journalist who documented the actor’s fight against cancer. Richardson said the Oscar-nominated actor died Sunday. Postlethwaite had little going for him when he started in an industry where good looks — think Robert Redford or George Clooney — are valued. He had few connections, a name that was hard to pronounce, and could distinguish himself only by his talent.

It was a subtle talent, hard to

define, marked by an ability to completely inhabit a role, to convey a deep sense of burden with a glance or a shrug. There were no pyrotechnics, nothing was overstated. But he had a powerful presence and authenticity on screen and on stage.

It was this that prompted director Steven Spielberg — who used Postlethwaite twice — to call him “probably the best actor in the world.”

Postlethwaite was part of a small coterie of British actors who came up together through the theater and found a measure of success in Hollywood. The group included Daniel Day-Lewis and Emma Thompson, longtime friends who starred with him in “In the Name of the Father,” a 1993 classic that earned Postlethwaite a best supporting actor Oscar nomination for his role as Day-Lewis’ father.

That part drew heavily on Postlethwaite’s ability to give a victim’s troubles wider meaning. His character is wrongly imprisoned after his son implicates him in a deadly IRA bombing he did not commit. Postlethwaite’s quiet sense of hurt and injustice helps carry the film, regarded as one of the finest to deal with the long conflict in Northern Ireland. □

MICHEAL JACKSON

Continued from Front Page

Murray has pleaded not guilty, and last week defense attorneys indicated they may focus on a mysterious syringe found near Jackson to explore whether someone other than Murray injected the singer with the fatal dose of propofol.

Some experts are skeptical about that possible defense, which is based on the assumption that Jackson, an admitted drug abuser, could have administered the propofol to himself.

“It plays to what people perceive Jackson was about and that he might have done it, but it’s hard to see how it occurs without Murray having some role in it,” said Laurie Levenson, a professor at Loyola Law School.

PRELUDE TO A TRIAL?

Last week, Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Michael Pastor cleared the way for the defense to test residue from syringes and an intravenous tube used to administer drugs to Jackson. Following Jackson’s death, the Los Angeles County coroner determined that propofol and the sedative lorazepam were the main drugs that caused Jackson’s death.

In their investigation, police and prosecutors focused on Murray and whether he had given Jackson too many drugs when the doctor should have known better.

Evidence in Jackson’s death has been outlined in search warrant affidavits, but prosecutors will present more of their case against Murray in the preliminary hearing, which the doctor’s attorneys say could last two weeks.

That would be even longer than the one-week preliminary hearing for football great O.J. Simpson’s notorious 1995 trial on a charge he murdered his ex-wife, Levenson said. Most preliminary hearings in Los Angeles last a few hours at most. In the end, the judge in the Murray case is largely expected to order a full trial because the burden of proof on prosecutors is low at a preliminary hearing.

Legal experts also see obstacles to any last-minute plea deal between prosecutors and defense attorneys.

“It sounds to me that this is going to be a trial,” said Bennett Gershman, a former New York prosecutor. “There’s just too many close factual questions that don’t seem like they’re going to be resolved by some kind of plea.”

Steven Cron, an attorney who teaches at Pepperdine Law School, said Murray’s lawyers may pursue a different defense if the case does go beyond the preliminary phase. If that occurs, Cron said testimony of medical experts will be key given that Murray was alone with Jackson in his last waking hours.

“It’s going to be a case of dueling experts. Whose expert is more credible and why,” he said. □

BUSINESS**Aruba TODAY****Stocks start 2011 with a lift**By **DAVID K. RANDALL**,
AP Business Writer

NEW YORK – Stocks started 2011 with a lift Monday thanks to better news on the economy. Manufacturing activity and construction spending both rose more than analysts were predicting. The Institute of Supply Management's index of manufacturing activity rose in December for the 17th straight month. Separately, the Commerce Department said construction spending rose 0.4 percent in November.

The Dow Jones industrial average jumped 125 points, or 1.1 percent, to 11,703 in afternoon trading.

The Standard and Poor's 500 index gained 17, or 1.4 percent, to 1,275. The Nasdaq composite rose 48, or 1.8 percent, to 2,701.

The gains were broad. All 10 company groups that make up the S&P index rose. Financial companies led the way with a 2.2 percent jump.

Bank of America Corp. shot up 5.3 percent to \$14.05 after

the bank settled a dispute with Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac over soured mortgage investments. That was the best performance among the 30 stocks that make up the Dow index. McDonalds Corp. had the largest fall, losing 0.1 percent to \$76.70.

The better economic news dimmed the appeal of safer assets. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note, which rises as its price falls, moved up to 3.34 percent from 3.29 percent late Friday.

Small companies, which are considered riskier investments, surged. The Russell 2000, which tracks the performance of smaller stocks, jumped 1.9 percent.

Traders on Wall Street see early gains in January as a sign that that stocks will rise throughout the year. A gain in the S&P index during the first five days of January has preceded annual gains nearly 90 percent of the time, according to the Stock Trader's Almanac.

At the same time, smaller companies tend to do better early in the year than large ones, a phenomenon known as the January effect. Some of that has to do with traders buying the shares of riskier small companies in a new year after selling underperforming shares in December to reap tax benefits, said Jeffrey Hirsch, the editor of the Stock Trader's Almanac.

In corporate news, Goldman Sachs Group Inc. gained 2.6 percent to \$172.58 after the New York Times reported that it bought a stake in Facebook in a deal that valued the company at \$50 billion. Facebook remains a private company, though its shares are traded on private stock exchanges.

Shares rose throughout Europe earlier in the day after a report showed that manufacturing in countries that use the euro expanded faster than analysts had forecast. The Euro Stoxx 50 index rose 0.6 percent.

Benchmark indexes in France

Factories grow for 17th straight month in Dec.By **CHRISTOPHER S. RUGABER**,
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON – Manufacturers produced more goods and booked more orders last month, leading to the fastest growth in factory activity since May.

The Institute for Supply Management said Monday that its index of manufacturing activity rose to 57 in December from 56.6 in the previous month. Any reading over 50 indicates growth. The latest is well above the recession's low of 32.5, hit in December 2008. But it's below the reading of 60.4 in April, the highest level since June 2004.

The report shows that manufacturers carried considerable momentum into the new year. Automakers, computer and electronics companies, and industrial machinery firms showed particular strength, the Tempe, Ariz.-based ISM said.

A separate report Monday showed that construction spending rose 0.4 percent in November, the third straight monthly increase. Builders began work on more homes and the government boosted its investment in construction projects to lift spending to \$810.2

billion, the Commerce Department said. Still, that's only 2.3 percent above August's figure, which was the lowest level in a decade.

Manufacturing has been one of the strongest performers since the recession ended in June 2009. The latest report suggests that is likely to continue in the coming months. People have been spending more money in recent months, and businesses have had a hard time keeping their shelves stocked. Economists say that has many factories anticipating more demand.

And the tax-cuts signed into law last month by President Barack Obama will put more money into people's pockets this year and enable companies to write-off the full cost of new, big-ticket capital goods, such as industrial machinery. Both steps should encourage more spending.

"Manufacturing firms continue to experience, and plan for, a sustained economic expansion," said John Silvia, chief economist at Wells Fargo Securities. "We are moving from recovery to expansion in the economy."

The new orders index rose sharply to 60.9, the highest level since May. The production index also jumped. □



Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange early in the trading session in New York January 3, 2011.

and Belgium each rose more than 2 percent.

The dollar was flat against an index of six heavily traded currencies. Stocks in the U.S. ended mixed on Friday, which marked the last day of trading in 2010. For many investors, 2010 turned out better than expected. Every major stock market index in the U.S. increased by double digits.

The S&P 500, the market

measure used by most professional investors, returned 15.1 percent after dividends. Historically, the index has returned an average of 10.01 percent a year, including dividends.

Stocks ended 2010 especially strong. The S&P gained 20 percent over the last four months of the year, capped by a 7 percent jump in December. □

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Fruta Planta, Passion Coffee and Rock Hard Extreme, marketed as dietary supplements, weight loss products, energy boosters

and sexual enhancement products have been recalled for unlisted Sulfoildenafil (steroid) and Food and Drug Administration unapproved

sibutramine. PRock Marketing of Kissimmee, Fla., is recalling all Fruta Planta and Reduce Weight Fruta Planta products, sold online and through e-mail advertising and infomercials. Fruta Planta contains sibutramine, a drug withdrawn by the FDA for health and safety issues. The FDA has received numerous reports of health problems linked to Fruta Planta, including heart complications and one death. Here is the Fruta Planta product image, listed under the FDA Medical Product Fraud department. Note that it is marketed as "100% organic." Fruta Planta proclaims to help users lose 25 pounds in one month with "no adverse side effects" and "no exercise;" 25 pounds in one month isn't even healthy weight loss, let alone the fact Fruta Planta does contain dangerous sibutramine. If you have any Fruta Planta in your home, you are urged to discard it in a sealed container.

Drive Total Energy has

recalled Passion Coffee and Rock Hard Extreme, marketed as energy boosters, sexual enhancements and dietary supplements. Passion Coffee and Rock Hard Extreme contain an analog or hybrid of Sildenafil called Sulfoildenafil. Sildenafil has been declared safe for use with erectile dysfunction. The analog Sulfoildenafil has not been FDA approved for safety. Also Total Drive Energy Passion Coffee and Rock Hard Extreme have not declared Sulfoildenafil in their products. Erectile Dysfunction drugs are very dangerous for consumers with heart problems or those who are prescription medication for cholesterol, hypertension, high blood pressure, diabetes or a heart condition. Additionally, men who take these medications are usually at risk for Erectile Dysfunction and may seek out products like Magic Coffee, Rock Hard Extreme and Total Drive Energy. These products join Duro Extend, Magic

Coffee Powder, and Man Up Now as products recalled for undeclared Sulfoildenafil. With the list of steroid tainted dietary supplements, weight loss products, energy boosters and sexual enhancements growing longer, Consumers are advised beware of all products sold in this category, especially those sold online or marketed by email or infomercial. Customers should be cautious about purchasing products labeled in a foreign language. Imported products like Fruta Planta are to be avoided especially because most foreign countries have very different product health and safety standards. Very often, health products imported from foreign countries do not follow product labeling laws. "Truth in Advertising" is a huge problem with foreign made and marketed goods. Currently, the United States has relatively tariff-free trade with these countries, so consumers have unapproved, potentially dangerous drugs readily available. □

Judo deaths alarm Japanese parents

TOKYO – Research showing that an average of four children die each year during judo lessons in Japan has alarmed some parents as the country prepares to introduce martial arts as a compulsory school sport.

Yoshihiro Murakawa is one of those concerned about the government's plan, because he is convinced his 12-year-old nephew died in a reckless judo practice.

The Japan Judo Accident Victims Association, which Murakawa helped create with other families last March, has urged the government to set safety guidelines for judo at school.

"Many factors are involved here," Murakawa said of his nephew Koji's death during judo club training.

"First of all, many judo instructors at Japanese schools are too ignorant about what to do when a serious incident occurs," he told AFP.

Murakawa also criticised some judo club instructors at Japanese schools for neglecting safety measures, such as letting children rest properly. Koji's mother had asked for special attention to be paid to him when he joined the judo club at a middle school in central Shiga prefecture, because he had an asthma problem.

But one afternoon in July 2009, Koji was still tackling older students and the instructor in the freestyle "randori" training despite being exhausted, Murakawa quoted students as saying.

After a final throw, Koji lost consciousness and fell into a coma before dying a month later, Murakawa said.

At least 110 children were killed in school judo practice over 27 years from 1983, according to research by Ryo Uchida, an assistant professor at Aichi University of Education.

"In judo, the number of cases in which trainees die due to techniques unique to



the sport such as throwing is significantly high," said Uchida.

In 2009 and 2010 alone, 13 children have died and the latest case, involving a six-year-old boy, occurred in November, a local newspaper reported.

Parents have been alarmed by the statistics because Japan plans to introduce traditional martial arts, including judo, as a required subject not only for boys but also girls at middle schools from 2012. Middle school pupils are aged between 12 and 15. □

In U.S., Obesity Afflicts Even Some of the Tiniest Tots

By Randy Dotinga

American kids are becoming obese, or nearly so, at an increasingly young age, with about one-third of them falling into that category by the time they're 9 months old, researchers have found.

There are some caveats about the research, however. The infants were not studied recently: They were born about a decade ago. And it's not clear how excess weight in babies may affect their health later in their lives. The study found no guarantee that a baby who's overweight at 9 months will stay flabby when his or her second birthday rolls around.

Still, the study -- in the January-February 2011 issue of the American Journal of Health Promotion -- does present a picture of babies and infants who are carrying around a lot of extra weight. The findings also suggest that small changes in an infant's diet can make a big difference, said Dr. Wendy Slusser, medical director of a children's weight program at Mattel Children's Hospital at the University of California, Los Angeles. For example, she said, "if you don't give your kid juice and have them eat the fruit instead, suddenly there's 150 calories less a day that can make a big difference in weight gain over a long term."

The researchers examined federal data about 16,400 children in the United States who were born in 2001. After adjusting the statistics so they wouldn't be thrown off by such factors as high numbers of certain kinds of kids, the study authors found that 17 percent of 9-month-olds were obese and 15 percent were at risk for obesity, for a total of 32 percent.

At two years, 21 percent were obese and 14 percent were at risk of becoming obese, the investigators found.

"It seems like there tends to be a shift to kids getting heavier" over time, said the study's lead author, Brian G. Moss, an adjunct faculty member at Wayne State University School of Social Work. And their weight gain, he said, is beyond that which would be expected as youngsters grow.

Hispanics and poor kids as a whole were at highest risk, the study found, whereas girls and Asian/Pacific Islanders had the lowest risk.

But why are young children so heavy and getting heavier, as a whole, over time? The study didn't examine the reasons. Moss said the changes could have something to do with changes in their lives, such as entering daycare or starting to eat regular food, but the precise causes are not clear. □

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Cretan tools point to 130,000-year-old sea travel



ATHENS, Greece — Archaeologists on the island of Crete have discovered what may be evidence of one of the world's first sea voyages by human ancestors, the Greek Culture Ministry said Monday. A ministry statement said experts from Greece and the U.S. have found rough axes and other

tools thought to be between 130,000 and 700,000 years old close to shelters on the island's south coast.

Crete has been separated from the mainland for about five million years, so whoever made the tools must have traveled there by sea (a distance of at least 40 miles). That would upset the current view that

human ancestors migrated to Europe from Africa by land alone.

"The results of the survey not only provide evidence of sea voyages in the Mediterranean tens of thousands of years earlier than we were aware of so far, but also change our understanding of early hominids' cognitive

abilities," the ministry statement said.

The previous earliest evidence of open-sea travel in Greece dates back 11,000 years (worldwide, about 60,000 years although considerably earlier dates have been proposed).

The tools were found during a survey of caves and rock shelters near the village of Plakias by archaeologists from the American School of Classical Studies at Athens and the Culture Ministry.

Such rough stone implements are associated with Heidelberg Man and Homo Erectus, extinct precursors of the modern human race, which evolved

from Africa about 200,000 years ago.

"Up to now we had no proof of Early Stone Age presence on Crete," said senior ministry archaeologist Maria Vlazaki, who was not involved in the survey. She said it was unclear where the hominids had sailed from, or whether the settlements were permanent.

"They may have come from Africa or from the east," she said. "Future study should help."

The team of archaeologists has applied for permission to conduct a more thorough excavation of the area, which Greek authorities are expected to approve later this year.

Indian Rocket Launch Failure Caused By Faulty Cable

BANGALORE - A team that analyzed data from the failed launch of India's Geostationary Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) has found the primary cause of the Dec. 25 mishap was the "untimely and inadvertent snapping" of a group of 10 connectors located at the bottom of the rocket's Russian supplied upper stage.

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) said in a Dec. 31 statement that the vehicle's performance was normal up to 47.5 seconds after liftoff. It then began to stray from its planned orientation angle, which resulted in higher structural loads than the vehicle was designed to handle.

The rocket, which was carrying a telecommunications satellite, began to break apart about 58 seconds into the flight and was destroyed by command at 64 seconds. ISRO said some of the connectors that snapped carried command signals from the onboard computer near the top of the vehicle to the control systems for the four L40 strap-on boosters that augment the rocket's first stage.

These connectors are intended to be separated by command 292 seconds after liftoff but their "premature" rupture stopped the flow of control commands to the boosters, resulting in the loss of control of the



vehicle, ISRO said.

"The exact cause of snapping of the set of connectors whether due to external forces like vibration or dynamic pressure is to be analyzed further and pinpointed," ISRO said.

The statement said ISRO has formed a committee to carry out an in-depth analysis of the failed flight as well as of the previous six GSLV missions and recommend corrective

actions. The committee is chaired by G. Madhavan Nair, former chairman of ISRO, and has 11 experts drawn from within and outside ISRO.

ISRO also has created a panel led by K. Kasturirangan, also a former ISRO chairman, to look into the future of the GSLV program and the vehicle's reliability for upcoming missions including the Chandrayaan-2 mission to

the moon, which is slated for launch in 2013.

ISRO plans to complete these reviews by the end of February, the statement said. All but one of the GSLV's flights to date have used a Russian-built cryogenic upper stage, but only one of those engines remains. ISRO has developed its own cryogenic upper stage, but that engine failed in its debut mission earlier in 2010. □

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EEUU presentará nuevo embajador a Venezuela

WASHINGTON (AP) — Estados Unidos confirmó el lunes que presentará un nuevo candidato a embajador en Caracas y describió como “informal y breve” la conversación que sostuvo el mandatario venezolano Hugo Chávez con la secretaria de Estado Hillary Clinton el fin de semana.

El portavoz de Departamento de Estado P.J. Crowley dijo en conferencia de prensa que la candidatura de Larry

Palmer como embajador expiró al culminar la sesión legislativa del 2010, después de que el gobierno venezolano rechazara el mes pasado su beneplácito al diplomático estadounidense por haber respondido en un cuestionario del Congreso que las FARC se refugian en Venezuela y que los cubanos infiltraron las fuerzas armadas venezolanas. “Tendremos que renombrar un candidato a embajador”, dijo Crowley.

Los dos gobiernos han

Argentina:

Ladrones cavan túnel y roban banco

BUENOS AIRES (AP) — Al menos tres ladrones saquearon más de 100 cajas de seguridad de un banco al que accedieron a través de un túnel subterráneo de 30 metros, informaron el lunes las autoridades.

El hecho se produjo en la sucursal del estatal Banco Provincia del barrio de Belgrano, en el norte de Buenos Aires.

La entidad informó que fueron vulneradas “entre 130 y 140 cajas de seguridad de las 1408 existentes en la sucursal” y que “el hecho fue descubierto esta mañana (del lunes) al comenzar las operaciones habituales”.

Los delincuentes rentaron en julio un local lindero al banco y cavaron un túnel “de 25 a 30 metros” de largo hasta el sector donde se ubican las cajas de seguridad, dijo a periodistas el fiscal Martín Niklison.

El funcionario judicial explicó que los asaltantes ingresaron al banco el viernes 31 de diciembre, día que no operó por el fin de año. Trabajaron durante todo el fin de semana en la apertura de las cajas sin ser descubiertos y completaron la maniobra el lunes por la mañana.

Niklison relató que los delincuentes cargaron el botín y se marcharon en automóvil, según la filmación de cámaras de seguridad. El fiscal agregó que las alarmas antisísmicas sonaron en varias oportunidades, pero que la policía de la zona no tenía acceso al banco para verificar cuál era la causa. El túnel tenía luces, ventilación y revestimiento en las paredes, según los peritajes.

“Es un trabajo realmente impresionante”, admitió el fiscal, quien no descartó que algún empleado del banco haya sido “cómplice” de los ladrones.

Cientos de clientes indignados se agolparon frente al banco para reclamar por sus ahorros y hasta cortaron la avenida sobre la que se ubica la entidad mientras esperaban que las autoridades les confirmaran si sus propias cajas habían sido vaciadas.

“En este momento en la sucursal se los está atendiendo. El mensaje que les queremos dar es que vamos a proteger sus intereses luego de este hecho”, aseguró al canal C5N el vicepresidente del Banco Provincia, Gustavo Marangoni. □

mostrado posiciones firmes en las últimas semanas. Estados Unidos revocó la visa del embajador venezolano

Bernardo Alvarez luego de la negativa de Chávez a aceptar a un nuevo representante nombrado por Washington. Pese a la tirantez diplomática, Clinton y Chávez se dieron la mano durante la toma de posesión de la mandataria brasileña Dilma Rousseff el sábado.

Crowley dijo que el encuentro “pasó rápidamente de un breve saludo a una especie de conversación más amplia, pero todavía informal y

breve” y afirmó desconocer lo que conversaron.

Chávez dijo a periodistas en el aeropuerto de Brasilia poco antes de su retorno a Caracas que “nos saludamos. Ella creo que estaba entrando al salón, tenía una sonrisa muy espontánea y yo le saludé con la misma efusividad. Fue un rato ameno, hablamos una dos o tres cosas puntuales”.

El congresista republicano Connie Mack criticó a Clinton al sostener que “el estrechón de manos de Clinton y los chistes del (presidente Barack) Obama sobre desviar el avión

presidencial para visitar a su amigo Hugo Chávez me dicen que este gobierno no le da la debida importancia a la seria amenaza que Chávez representa para nuestra nación”.

Mack, un crítico acérrimo de Chávez que presidirá el subcomité para el hemisferio occidental de la cámara baja en el congreso que se instalará esta semana, agregó en un comunicado de prensa que “Clinton y Obama deberían dejar de mimar a terroristas y dejar de negarse a incluir a Venezuela en la lista de estados que patrocinan el terrorismo”. □

Primer ministro surcoreano firma acuerdo con Paraguay

ASUNCION (AP) — El primer ministro surcoreano Kim Hwang-Sik firmó el lunes con el presidente Fernando Lugo un acuerdo bilateral para aplicar tecnología en algunos programas de salud pública y desarrollo social de Paraguay.

Un informe del palacio de gobierno no dio mayores detalles pero la suscripción del convenio fue un acto público. Los documentos serán reglamentados más adelante por la cancillería y el Congreso cuando se definan los montos de la cooperación surcoreana.

Miguel López, jefe del gabinete civil de Lugo, comentó que “el interés del gobierno es crear las condiciones propicias para que Corea del Sur realice inversiones en el país”.

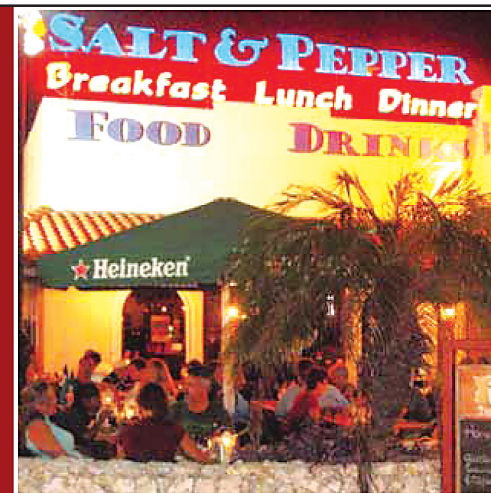
Hwang-Sik llegó procedente de Brasilia donde el domingo se reunió con la presidenta Dilma Rousseff, a quien ofreció un acuerdo de libre comercio con el bloque económico Mercosur que integran Argentina, Brasil, Paraguay y Uruguay. □



El presidente de Paraguay Fernando Lugo, izquierda, y el primer ministro de Corea del Sur Kim Hwang-Sik sonríen durante una reunión en el palacio de gobierno en Asunción, Paraguay, el lunes 3 de enero de 2011. (AP Foto/Jorge Saenz)



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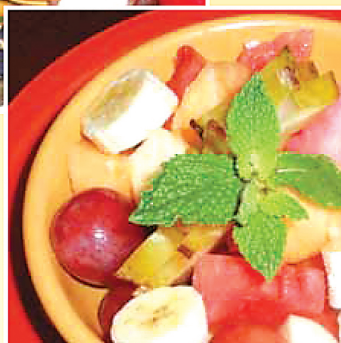


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